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# wire

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Anthony Wood, Founder/Managing Editor  
Chrissie Murray, Editor (Production)  
Chris Parker, Publisher

## ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

David Hogan

## ADMINISTRATION

Jan Diakow  
Adele Jones

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JAK KILBY



Blakey and Charles Tamborough

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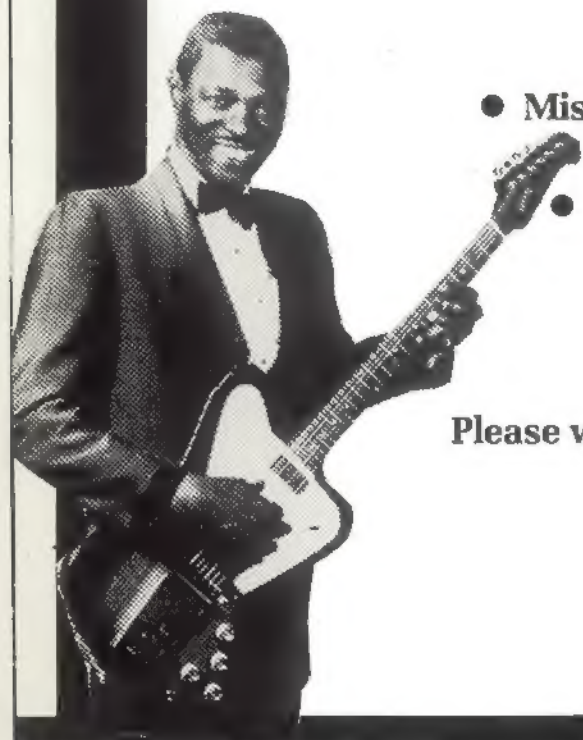
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## O N T H E W I R E

## ■ A PERSONAL OPINION BY GREG MURPHY

The death of Count Basie brought me back to a recurring theme, one that always presents itself when a jazz artist dies. It is, quite simply, that as the major craftsmen pass on, what will happen to jazz?

This thought first occurred when Wes Montgomery died so suddenly in 1968. Wes was perhaps the last major black jazz artist to maintain a contact with the record-buying public at large – as opposed to the specialist jazz market. John Coltrane was highly respected by the public, and, yet, *his* contemporary recordings, with a much greater jazz content, appeared only in the specialist charts.

This, possibly implies that jazz has only itself to blame for its narrow appeal. The growth of jazz – arguably over the last seventy years – has followed a staircase pattern, the music being pushed further upward, with some remaining on landings which marked a particular state in the refinement of the genre. One of these landings was the big-band era – Benny Goodman, the Dorseys, Artie Shaw had instant audience appeal and represented the popular music of the day. To perhaps a lesser extent, so did that of Ellington, Basie, Lunceford, Chick Webb, Jay McShann and many others. It was a time when jazz was, as they once said, “box office” – even if much of the music had doubtful jazz antecedents. What was popular was the *drive* of the big bands rather than the cerebral content of the music and the charismatic appeal of such musicians as Harry James, Gene Krupa and Artie Shaw.

Jazz has been said to have over-intellectualised itself, leaving the mass appeal behind. But jazz has always had a degree of intellect about it – some of Ellington’s earlier extended works presaged the work of Parker and Gillespie, as did Lester Young’s technique and Art Tatum’s heart-stopping use of time. Yet, all those musicians were equally at home playing what has become known as “commercial” music.

One of the most controversial players of the Fifties, John Coltrane, had one aspect overlooked all too often. While those who should have known better were bad-mouthing his emergent uptempo style, his search for, and treatment of, neglected ballads was ignored. Happily, such items as “I’m A Dreamer” and “Love Thy Neighbour” have become part of the Coltrane legend.

The early Sixties represented the point where the public largely left jazz, and the so-called avant-garde movement all too often collects the blame. The fact that the music of Coltrane, Dolphy, Shepp, Ayler and several others represented a further step forward in the development of jazz is confused with an attempt at establishing a form of jazz elitism. True, there were often cases of self-indulgence but nothing like the other branch of jazz that began to develop in the late Sixties when Miles Davis the man who had so often acted as catalyst, produced *In A Silent Way*. His swirling, mystical rhythms and the intriguing patterns rightly caused a stir but, sadly, the music moved into a pattern which owed more to Motown than inspiration. Miles must have found a parallel with his one-time employer Charlie Parker who was trapped in the “Bird with strings” routine for a time. In much the same way, Miles’s new direction, which initially promised so much, increasingly became repetitive, and its popularity perhaps was due more to the rhythmic back beats than any cerebral component – for once, history did repeat itself.

Miles’s new direction spawned many subsidiary bands and coined a new phrase, “fusion” or “jazz-rock”. In fact, the music had more to do with rock with an occasional solo that bore a resemblance to jazz, but it was – and sometimes still is – akin to sitting through the morass of Paul Whiteman to catch the gem of a Bix solo. Fusion lives on but has become a sub-strata of pop rather than jazz. If the American sales charts for jazz are an indicator, they show albums which are almost universally removed from jazz, yet are seen as that by those who market and keep count. If jazz has a market appeal, it is in these pretenders to the throne. The only encouraging feature is the movement back to jazz as it is known by Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard and a few others, to produce fine albums by such units as VSOP II. This synthesiser, and even Miles Davis is playing “Bess You Is My Woman Now” once more.

But what of the avant-garde of the Sixties? Coltrane, Ayler and Dolphy are dead; Archie Shepp is still active but lacks the incredible fire displayed in those early Impulse recordings or the famous Jazz Expo performance which sent many running for the exits. Indeed, if anything, Shepp is taking stock, in a reflective mood with recordings of blues items, reflections on Charlie Parker and even piano excursions.

What has happened is the emergence of another generation of musicians who, if anything, keep the flame of the avant-garde. This new generation temper their enthusiasm and embody a spirit of preserving the jazz tradition with exploring new fields. Chico Freeman is one. Chico has recorded often, with contrasting albums such as the gentle *Spirit Sensitive* against others with a more extrovert approach. Arthur Blythe’s vital saxophone can be heard in a variety of contexts on record, too, but he is at his best with an unusual band featuring tuba and cello. Blythe’s *In The Tradition* album of several years ago seemed to personify the flexible approach taken. There are several others but perhaps most satisfying of all is David Murray whose fine octet recordings for Black Saint personify the way that modern jazz is moving, if only more people would listen. So, the avant-garde lives, too, if in more of a refined form than fusion, its chronological brother, but keeping an infinitely lower profile.

So, to return to the original question – what will happen to jazz when its practitioners have died?

First, let us not deceive ourselves that jazz suddenly lost its market appeal through increased cerebral content. Jazz had always had this element and it is the mass popularity the music enjoyed during the Thirties via the big bands that has led, perhaps, to this conclusion. It was not the jazz element that was any more popular – just that it was music right for the times.

Second, the development of jazz into many levels of development – traditional, mainstream, modern, avant-garde etc – means that jazz continues to function in many areas, a diversity which can only be good for the music life expectancy.

Third, the experience of music educators has shown that interest in jazz *per se* is still there, so that while we may bemoan the passing of yesterday’s and today’s masters, the next generation is following.

If evidence of this is still needed, the quiet survival and refinement of the avant-garde is perhaps the best example. If jazz has a future, this is perhaps the most fruitful road to follow. ■



# LIVE WIRE

## ACTUAL 84 – I

### Bloomsbury Theatre, London

First, the bad news. The latest Actual, housed in a more amenable venue and offering a wider range of improved musics than before, still failed to draw the crowds.

One could speculate for ever as to why; my own hunch is that the times – recession, unemployment, poverty & co – simply can't support a week-long festival of minority-interest music. It's no accident that the biggest audiences came on the nights of the big American names and of the most catholic musical appeal. The implications for UK improvisers are pretty grim as the chill of Thatcher's icy economic resolve cuts through to every bone (and sax, and axe...).

The better news is that from the entrance of The Jazz Doctors in white coats and blue surgeons' caps to a closing set which featured Anthony Braxton, a lantern and a large slide of a railway station, Actual 84 was alive with music that dared to be funny, intimate and full of surprise.

The Jazz Doctors took a gamble in beginning with a new suite but, after an initial stiffness, they swung to it with infectious glee. Regular medics Billy Bang and Frank Lowe were backed by a new rhythm section of Wilber Morris and AACM veteran Thurman Barker, both of whom proved fine soloists but were less happy together. Morris's laid-back bass sometimes at odds with Barker's dynamic propulsion. Lowe and Bang, though, were a sour/sweet duo of perfect complements – the guttural, spluttering tenor balanced by a fleet and fluid violin. Frank Lowe has come a long way from the relentless ferocity of his Sixties' music; he's a master of discipline now, his harsh cries and dark sobbing gulps all the more effective for their sparing use. Billy Bang was in fine form, too; skittish, skipping phrases reeled from his fiddle like aural streamers that wound in and out of the music, festooning this "Doctors' Suite" with its final, carnival air.

The quartet's brisk bop through "Loweology" left us cheering for more but instead we got the longest interval in living memory as Geri Allen's group, detained by immigration officials, were late arriving. Their dispiriting ordeal perhaps accounted for a fitful set which never quite fulfilled the promise of its many brilliant flashes. Allen, pianist with Oliver Lake's Jump Up band, was supported by Lake himself (a dreadlocked

Lester Young), bassist Santi DeBriano and drummer Andrew Cyrille, for me the dominant presence in this music. As Cyrille played, he danced in his seat and the rhythms danced, too, from a light, crisp swing to the rapturous thunder which opened "A Celebration Of All Life". On this tune in particular, Cyrille's skill astonished: he played hands, mouth, cheeks and chest with brilliant, hilarious timing. In contrast, Lake, squealing and squawking, soared and flapped, soared and flapped like a stricken bird; Geri Allen, too, ruminative and reserved on her solos, seemed beset by a general tension that, until the closing "Celebration", kept snagging the flow. They kept getting close, but never quite *there*.

Tuesday and Thursday nights brought a shift of emphasis to a more intimate, improvisational music. John Russell (guitar) and Lou Houtkamp (saxes) kicked off on Tuesday with a dry exchange of shrieks and scratches that gradually evolved into a fascinating duet of unlikely noises. Wheezes, honks, tinkles, clucks and whimpers made up a minimalist music which managed to embrace both the harsh and the dreamlike within its narrow confines. Still, I preferred the later pairing of Pierre Dorge and John Tchicai for the richer range of sounds and emotions they chose to explore. Tchicai is a marvellous saxist; tall and gaunt as Don Quixote, his playing too has a full-hearted soulfulness that recalls the chivalrous Spaniard. He began with a flurry of allusions, edged into Monk then blew a wailing, plangent tribute to Albert Ayler ("Mothers") that hung in the air and rang in my head all that night. Dorge proved an effective match; his guitar colourings – chiming, stinging – were a sympathetic foil for Tchicai's rampant sax. Between them they dabbled in slapstick, a little singing, some rousing crescendos and a whole setful of inspired musical dialogue.

Marilyn Crispell split the above duos with an impressive piano display that fully matched the quality of her *Rhythms Hung In Undrawn Sky* solo on Leo. Her three pieces showed a sustained intensity, tight control of dynamics and keen sense of drama (I particularly liked the bit where the festival organiser had to crawl under the piano to mend the pedal!). A music of incessant motion, its abrupt punctuations and scurrying diversions wove around, but never lost, the basic pulse. Indeed, for all the energy and occasional bravura runs, Crispell's greatest strength was the measured calm which underpinned her music. The lasting impression was of a structural and emotional coherence that gave her improvisations their sense of wholeness.

If Crispell's set was strikingly mature for a UK solo debut, Derek Bailey's Thursday evening performance had a pristine vigour which belied his time in the field. Strange harmonics, broken-back rhythmic phrases and fragmented melody lines were worked over, picked apart and restructured as his fingers scampered restlessly over the frets. Except for the occasional grimace, his face stayed expressionless and, however tangled the tempos, however speedy his playing, the music had that unhurried quality which reveals a master's touch. Even so, his set seemed to pass far too quickly!

Thursday's final grouping – Joelle Leandre, Irene Schweizer, George Lewis, Daunik Lazro – were, for me, one of the festival's highlights. Musicians so attuned to each other's sounds the interplay seemed telepathic, the art of playing transformed by the art of *listening* which lies at the very marrow of improvisation. Schweizer's piano – droll, percussive, Lewis's trombone – sardonic snorts, fat mellow smears, Leandre's versatile bass – agitated twangs to gravelly purrs, all melded in the endless dance of give and take that patterns the truest music. Lazro, though, hovered on the periphery, seemingly uncertain, rarely initiating any changes and only at the end jumping into the currents that swirled between the other three.

Such ebb and flow was the major organisational principle of Maggie Nicols' two-part Project (this year's special commission) and explicitly so in Contradictions' "Moonfish", a strange tale of life underwater. By turns allegory, whimsy and farce, "Moonfish" walked a thin line between enchantment and indulgence, though its gently lapping rhythms gradually disarmed my crabby scepticism. The music, a whispering network of percussion, horns, guitar and piano, sustained the otherworldly atmosphere well, but the wordy narrative and some lapses into precious humour became a drag. A little pruning might have helped a lot. Then, after some stirring acappella from the Brixton Young Socialists Community Choir, Very Varied stepped out with a very fine set of ensemble music that incorporated jazz, free and two stunning standards. Prompted by Terri Quaye's nimble percussion and Jim Dvorak's sly trumpet scats, Nicols sang, quipped, danced and sang some more, her freewheeling imagination in full spin. Best of all were her versions of "My Romance" and "My Girl", songs she unravelled and remade Nicols-style with great affection and skill.

Part two of her Project, on Sunday afternoon, never quite recaptured Very Varied's fire and empathy. Ten performers, in various combinations, played a succession of brief sets but the ebb and flow got so speedy here people were changing partners and dashing on and off stage like characters in a French farce. The result was an afternoon of *frissons* and small pleasures that were all too fleeting. Still, Lindsay Cooper, Annie Whitehead and Joelle Leandre shared some lovely growling resonances, and Phil Minton's amazing battery of vocal noises is always a joy to hear – as indeed is Maggie Nicols herself, a great debunker of musical mystification. The one thing I didn't really like was Roberta Garrison's dancing, a series of stretch-and-pose movements that seemed totally unrelated to the music.

The Project ended with a personal tribute to Sonia Lund by Anthony Wood with help from Trevor Watts, Phil Minton and Annie Whitehead. The naked emotion of this piece set it beyond critical comment, except to say that the stark grief of Wood's writing and the horns' impassioned blowing of "Ghosts" made a fittingly moving lament.

It was left to the evening performances, to Musica Electronica Viva and Anthony Braxton, to close Actual – perhaps for ever – in the appropriate blaze of glory; but you can read about that elsewhere in these pages. Actual may die but improvisation will doubtless live on in its various forms. On my way to that last set, crossing Charing Cross Road, I noticed flocks of starlings wheeling and diving in perfect unison high above. Their flight had a power and beauty that recalled the best of the week's music – and they didn't rehearse it either.

Graham Lock

Geri Allen





## ACTUAL 84 – II

The Actual Festival (Actual 84 this year) announced its fifth year with a change of dates and venue; and, consequently, a change of image. But this was no idle case of "changes-for-change-sake". During the previous four years the festival had consolidated its position as an important date in the musical calendar, with Actual Music consistently pulling together strong programmes and (just) pulling off the event as a whole. But the Actual Festival had aspirations which stretched beyond its previous venue – the ICA – and consequently, in 1984, settled at the Bloomsbury Theatre. The manoeuvre was not smoothly negotiated.

In short, with the exception of just a couple of concerts, audiences fell away drastically, dealing what must have been a crippling blow to Actual Music with promoter Anthony Wood now claiming (as he has in previous years) that it signifies the end of the festival (but, this year, it sounds like he really means it).

Even with hindsight, objective analysis of the festival's inability to draw an audience remains difficult, if not impossible. It has been argued that the drawing power of the bill had not been scaled up in proportion to the venue, that the Bloomsbury is not known as a jazz/improvised/free music venue in the way that the ICA is (not only through the Actual events but also Derek Bailey's Company projects and, further back, seasons of JCS gigs), and that shifting the dates of the festival to October resulted in an inability to attract overseas visitors in the way it had done in August. No doubt all these factors played their part.

Even so, as Wood pointed out, an identical festival staged on the Continent would have attracted large audiences. Is British apathy a root cause, too?

All this would not be worth mentioning were it not for the fact that this music responds palpably to its environment and surroundings, often in a very direct way.

The Bloomsbury Theatre is a comparatively formal venue, whereas the ICA – particularly with the seating in its three-sided configuration – can be a remarkably intimate venue, even when audiences are thin on the ground. At the Bloomsbury the musicians sometimes seemed stranded on stage, with an unbridgeable gulf to span in order to reach their audience.

This was particularly true of the lamentably attended concert on Saturday afternoon. Its impact on the Bugger All Stars and British Summer Time Ends, particularly, was evident. Both struggled with only intermittent success to connect with the sparse audience. Both groups offered us inspired moments but tied them together with periods of languor.

With Metcalfe's uncompromising approach to theatre and the guitar, and with the extraordinary range of texture and timbre Wachsmann's electronic hardware puts at the disposal of him and his violin, it is sometimes easy to underestimate the importance

# Actual 84

Garrett List



Anthony Braxton

of percussionist LeBaigue and saxophonist Hames in the shaping of the Buggers' music. They were often the ones who prodded and cajoled, provoking the music from its periods of torpor. But the Bugger All Stars have played far stronger sets. In fact, Wachsmann's solo set presented a far more concentrated and satisfying diet of musical ideas.

British Summer Time Ends, too, have played stronger sets, including the one I reviewed in *The Wire* 8 at the Purcell Room (part of RIM's festival). They played a shorter set at the Bloomsbury and there were some exciting moments but they failed to spin the sort of satisfying tapestry from their material that is their real achievement.

Two other groups featured at the RIM festival also appeared at Actual and acquitted themselves with very creditable performances. Supersession (a last-minute replacement for the Tony Oxley Drum Orchestra) and the Roger Turner/Phil Minton Duo reiterated the most effective features of their RIM sets and built upon them.

Part of the excitement of Supersession is their attempts to fuse two very different – but firmly established – musical identities. On the one hand there is Evan Parker and Barry Guy; long-standing partners from Parker's trios and quartets (they recorded a duo album together for SAJ) who have forged an individual language between them. On the other is Eddie Prevost and Keith Rowe, musicians who have developed a comparable relationship in AMM – a group whose vocabulary is quite different and superficially at odds with that of Parker and Guy. As the two partnerships work towards common ground they cannot help but cross-refer to the individual soundworlds they have established separately. The friction between these two different articulations, and the attempts to reconcile them, drew a fresh, muscular performance from the quartet which positively sparked with energy and life.

Phil Minton and Roger Turner have, individually and collectively, derived fresh sound material from extensions of the usual roles of voice and percussion. Their set absorbed with its firm grasp of a rich, human palette that draws the listener beyond the unusual nature of their vocabulary to the heart of the music itself, perhaps to the periphery of that internal drama of Minton's discussed in *The Wire* 8.

The power of these two sets was matched by that of Borbetomagus. They summoned up noise and shaped from it an organic fire-storm set. An article elsewhere in this issue examines at greater length the preoccupations of the group.

Trevor Watts, who also appeared at the RIM festival, brought Amalgam to Actual 84. The trio of Watts, violinist Peter Knight and drummer Liam Genockey are at the core of many of Watt's current projects and reveal the depth of that association in the easy empathy their music displays. The musicians conjured melodic or rhythmic ideas and introduced them into the proceedings in an almost charitable way, to be picked up by their associates or not, to be worked with or against or in tandem with other suggestions. Nobody was intent on imposing their ideas on their partners. As a consequence it was a mobile, fluid set; characterised by its warmth, the prehensile persuasiveness of its melodic invention and the intermittent Scandinavian folk inflection which surfaced in Knight's playing. Only very rarely did the collective improvisation appear to momentarily lose direction.

Terri Quaye and Hazel Carey constructed a programme of music and dance which they presented during Saturday afternoon's "Sight-Sound-Movement" feature. It was



etched in the muted colours one associates with the work of Quaye but, overall, it failed to convey the deep feelings usually associated with her work.

Also on Saturday afternoon, Martin Gerrard – in a set dubbed “jazz rap” – indulged his penchant for humour and word association in a series of “stream-of-consciousness” soliloquies delivered at machine-gun pace. It appeared, at times, to be a single-handed attempt to revive the beat poets’ movement without content or substance. His verbal posturings failed either to win me over or excite. When seen in the context of David Thomas’s performance later on that same day, Gerrard’s efforts seem increasingly limp.

Thomas is, by comparison, a born raconteur. He builds his verbal tableaux carefully, carrying you with him from the common-place to the extraordinary and on to the fantastical with a lacerating and challenging humour. What is more, he displayed a finely honed wisdom at the heart of his wit which bubbled up through his narratives and songs. In this he was supported, punctuated and marshalled by percussionist Chris Cutler and the reeds of Lindsay Cooper. In a musical liaison which stretches back through Henry Cow, Cutler and Cooper have evolved an obvious musical empathy and ability which meant that the idiosyncratic combination of voice, saxophone and percussion never sounded thin or inappropriate.

Earlier that same evening, Cutler and Cooper had been at the centre of a group assembled by Cooper to perform her music for films, including *The Gold Diggers*. The PA was not really up to the demands the ensemble placed upon it – and the first couple of songs, particularly, lacked the definition and punch the performances deserved. Nevertheless, it was a consistently fine performance with many exceptional moments, amongst them an impassioned rendition of “The Chartists’ Song” and “In The Year Of Miracles”, with Sally Potter handling the vocal part which Dagmar Krause appeared to have made her own on record (“Work Resumed On The Tower” by News From Babel) with assurance.

Dagmar Krause herself was joined by Jason Osborne at the piano in a brace of songs by Brecht, Weill and Eisler. Sandwiched between Cooper’s film music and David Thomas’s set, it completed a strong concert. She is a unique interpreter of these songs, bringing them an intense personal quality. She drew from the melodies and pointed lyrics an immediacy that is entirely contemporary. Too often performances of this material are either overly operatic or allow the rolling momentum of the music to take control at the expense of content. Krause achieved just the right balance (as a chilling version of “On Suicide” clearly displayed) and in doing so must have established herself as the natural heir to Lotte Lenya.

One recurrent theme which ran through the early part of the week was the strong impression made by a number of pianists who already attracted this writer’s interest on record. Geri Allen, Marilyn Crispell and – on Wednesday night – Sakis Papadimitriou all managed to consolidate the positive qualities they demonstrated on record, infusing their work with an inner strength of purpose only hinted at on vinyl.

Papadimitriou spent much of the set manipulating the piano interior but whereas many pianists use these techniques for variation or colouring during the course of their set – or even attempt to integrate longer sections by way of contrast – they were the fundamental material from which he constructed his music. In fact, when he briefly concluded his set at an un-“prepared” keyboard, Papadimitriou was at his least individual. Elsewhere, he used beaters on the piano strings as if playing a large dulcimer and “prepared” the piano strings so that he could employ the keyboard effectively to

evoke the qualities of a gamelan orchestra.

On Sunday evening, MEV and Anthony Braxton brought the festival to a close. MEV is a careful balance of its constituent parts. Alvin Curran and Richard Teitelbaum sit at electronic keyboards; usually they spin sweet-toned, yet acerbic, electronic motifs which they build into an undercurrent of swelling and shifting sound. Up through their tidal contributions Frederic Rzewski threads natural acoustic piano themes of poise and direct simplicity.

In MEV, Garrett List adopted the role of agent provocateur with trombone and an affinity for the occasional use of hard-edged, electronic percussion. As with Wachsmann within and without the Bugger All Stars, List had used a solo set to give full rein to a range of ideas which combined his instrument with electronic hardware. He matched a range of trombone/modulated voice/electronic percussion in effective juxtaposition to the films of Man Ray (themselves still extraordinary adventures in cinema). Both Wachsmann and List scaled these ideas down for use in the group context.

Braxton joined MEV on stage for their set which was generally characterised by its restraint. Like Amalgam, MEV allowed their music to grow collectively, rather than imposing upon it or directing it. Which is not to say that it lacked initiative – in fact, all the musicians consistently fed fresh ideas into the evolving music which pivoted about a reading by Rzewski of a letter home from an officer serving in Vietnam, returning to reiterate snippets of the letter in the closing moments of the set and providing an extra-musical dimension to the set.

The balance of Braxton and MEV was an interesting one. He joined them at first tentatively and then seemed to over-reach his context, as if “soloing” over the tapestry of MEV. Curran appeared to be slowly rising to meet him but List (using violent electronic percussives) met him head on as if by way of some slight reprimand. And it was as if Braxton understood that MEV was not a vehicle for solo features and subsequently wove his contributions into the grain of the ensemble music.

Braxton also gave the live premiere of his solo “Composition 113”, employing the slide of an underground station as a backdrop. He accomplished the work in about half the time that it took him on record (the piece is written as of indeterminate length) in something of a technical *tour de force*. He probed wry lyricism and long bouncing, sparkling melodic lines, twisting from aggressive barking to bittersweet sustain and back again. Yet the emotional impact of his virtuoso display often felt in danger of slipping away before the listener could grasp it.

The concert concluded with a brief duet from Braxton and Rzewski, the latter conjured slippery streams of notes, descending into curling melodic phrases. Braxton bounced his saxophone over the top of them and meshed into their slipstream. It was a happy partnership.

It would be a pity if we were to lose Actual now, the festival has provided the opportunity for British audiences to witness numerous overseas musicians who would otherwise not have reached these shores. Alongside them, the promoter has located many British groups and musicians who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to perform at a high profile festival. The two have cohabited naturally, providing a frame-work in which the work of musicians from home and abroad can establish a context for each other. No other British festival does that for this broad area of music.

Kenneth Ansell



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## RUBY BRAFF Pizza Express, London

Braff's visits to London are cannily spaced: never so frequent that they lead to audience complacency, his sojourns here always attract enthusiasts who seem fearful that this player of genius may tire of the whole thing and fail ever to come our way again.

Thus, I took the opportunity for several Dean Street meetings with Braff's always joyous and often inspired cornet wizardry.

His English companions were equal to their task of complementing and sustaining the American's creative flow, with pianist Brian Lemon performing with exceptional flair and true individuality in every situation. He has an almost uncanny sense of Braff's next direction, the harmonic choices and melody variations stimulating the cornetist and setting new courses without ever upsetting the visitor's equilibrium. Trio leader Jack Parnell and bassist Len Skeat kept their collective cool, too: these men are time-masters, aware of Braff's dynamic needs and quick to react when he turned to them for an instant duet or solo interlude.

For Braff, mere words never seem quite enough. His unique style, which can evoke Louis, Hackett or Berigan in momentary allusions before a bop-like flurry changes the musical perspective, is served by an imaginative capacity that ensures a kaleidoscope of effects as his improvisations unfold. High stabbed notes are followed by low-register rumblings, laconic throwaway passages by sweetly lyrical sequences before a coda that leads on, somehow, to another fine show tune. This allowed "When I Fall in Love", taken with care, to become "Love Walked In", all sudden thrusts, before "Easy Living" at uptempo, was alternately peppy and laidback. Dazzling.

Peter Vacher

## GERRY MULLIGAN AND THE LSO Royal Festival Hall, London

For some time now Mulligan has been appearing with symphony orchestras. He performs works by himself and others in which he acts as (soprano and baritone) saxophone soloist, or which combine the orchestra with his quartet, and usually these occasions include a set by the quartet alone. London's first experience of this began with Michel Sasson conducting the European premiere of Leonard Bernstein's "Divertimento". A brief, noisily empty affair, this none the less includes an ersatz blues that is just the thing to irritate any jazz fans in the audience (most especially, perhaps, the gentleman somewhere to my right who periodically throughout the evening called for "Funny Valentine").

Next the quartet played "For an Unfinished Woman", a gentle piece in Mulligan's usual ballad style. Then he soloed with the orchestra in "The Sax Chronicles", a concoction by the Canadian composer Harry Freedman which provided the concert's least satisfying moments. The idea was to present some of Mulligan's themes in the styles of several classical composers. If well done, either as pastiche or satire, such an exercise can be nothing more than an amusement but Freedman had simply no grasp at all of the various styles at which he was aiming. "Festive Minor" did not remotely resemble Mozart, "Willows" was nothing like Debussy etc and the whole thing had no point at all.

Mulligan's "Entente" offered a light-music accompaniment to his baritone saxophone, with an occasional short, banal orchestral apotheosis. Yet here, as elsewhere, he played beautifully, his solos full of fresh invention and expressive nuance and one longed for a more abrasive context. This should have been provided by the quartet, which now consists of Bill Mays (piano), Frank Luther (bass) and Richard de Rosa (drums), but the young men's work, though spirited and accomplished, was common-place. Mulligan himself produced some interesting ideas on the soprano saxophone in "Walk on the Water" and again played superb baritone in a very appealing "Song for Strayhorn". Too bad he had to insult the audience by suggesting that we probably did not know the latter's name.

At least combining quartet and orchestra, Mulligan's "K-4 Pacific" was the evening's most ambitious undertaking. The trouble with bringing a jazz band and a symphony orchestra together is that the two ensembles evolved in different circumstance for different purposes. Only the elaborate, large-scale Mátyás Seiber-John Dankworth "Improvisations" got close to success, and that survives only on a long-deleted Saga LP and in the pages of *A Jazz Retrospect*. Mulligan did well to dovetail orchestra and quartet neatly. And again his own playing was splendid.

Max Harrison

# LIVE WIRE

## STEVE LACY AND SHIRO DAIMON *Kabuki-Woogie* Bloomsbury Theatre, London

Though some goons imagine it was invented by the avant garde, collective improvisation has always been among the main achievements of jazz. What is surprising is that there have been so few attempts at combining jazz with other kinds of improvisation to form new types of collective endeavour.

Steve Lacy and Shiro Daimon began, however, when they met in Paris during 1976 and have repeatedly come together for ventures like *Kabuki-Woogie* which had its world premiere on this occasion. Lacy you know about but it perhaps should be said that Daimon is a celebrated Noh artist who studied Kabuki in Japan and was for four years a member of the Hanayagitokubei Company. Later, he studied Noh Theatre and yoga, and presented solo and group performances in Tokyo before going on to Paris.

In *Kabuki-Woogie*, improvisations in sound and movement sometimes alternated, were sometimes combined. It began with Lacy circling high up in the theatre, playing a stubbornly elemental solo with only a few melodic intervals and much repetition. Gradually, he descended, coming finally on to the empty stage where he finished his solo. Hearing Lacy's music only on records for several years, it had often seemed to me to lack a dimension but, as usual, listening to the artist in person supplied a corrective. For one thing, no LP quite conveys the size and austere beauty of his tone.

Daimon can be a crouching animal, a whirling top, a slyly crawling snake, an acrobatic tumbler but he also commands movements which are almost infinitely slow in their rate of progress. In these, the disciplines of yoga must be important. That empty stage was adorned only by an orange cloth, like a loose sack, hanging back centre, and before Lacy's first solo ended we knew there was something inside it.

Lights were occasionally flashing from various positions and at different angles, and slowly their frequency and brightness increased. Yet far slower was Daimon's miming of an insect, perhaps a butterfly, emerging from its chrysalis, testing its powers of movement, painfully failing, then succeeding. Attached to him by a long tube was a red balloon which, again very slowly, inflated. At first he appeared to ignore it but, as it grew, the relationship changed and the balloon became a precious object, to be cherished, held high. Then it burst, and Daimon at once collapsed, seemingly dead.

In accompanying, Lacy used the outer edges of his technique, the avant garde "noises" which "true" jazz fans love to hate. It was obvious, however, that there was a poetic correspondence between these sounds and Daimon's "insect" movements. No description of the several following solos and mimings is necessary, though further possibilities – several dancers, several players, elaborate scenery, costumes, etc – were suggested. The audience was the usual London dance crowd, with few jazz faces. For perfectly obvious reasons, those concerned with jazz should take more interest in the art of dance.

Max Harrison





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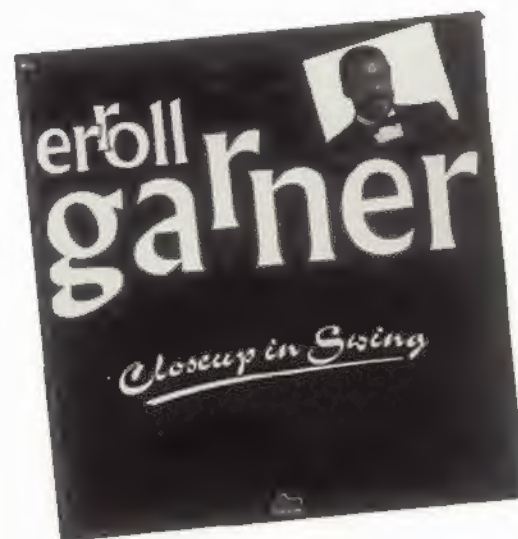
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# THE MIKE ZWERIN COLUMN

A VISITING Japanese journalist asked me: "How do American jazz musicians regard French jazz musicians?" The answer is too general for this limited space, so let us focus on New York.

Learning to play jazz in high school, my friends and I were absolutely sure of two things; bebop was the only music and New York the only place. This was the capital, we were the spearhead. Being the best cat in any other town was a small-change credit. If you can't make it in New York, you don't make it. Period.

The term "West Coast jazz" was pejorative more than descriptive. Out there they played with limp wrists, no balls, with sun-scorched brains. Transplanted New Yorkers making heavy LA studio money today still admit to having lost their edge which is why Toshiko and Lew Tabackin moved back last year, despite their successful LA big band.

Talk all you want about jazz as an international art form, and grant Albert Mangelsdorff and Steve Lacy as exceptions, New Yorkers basically consider Europe the sticks. Joe Zawinul once said, with his finger-popping Austrian accent: "People either got it or they don't. Those that got it, sooner or later we come to Brooklyn." And sooner or later, in moments of weakness, New Yorkers who live in Europe for years worry if they are still tough enough to cut it back home.

It's partly self-fulfilling propaganda.

Talk enough people into believing a myth and it becomes fact. It's called "hype". Fast-talking New Yorkers lay down hip hypes. Although swing is not inherently determined by race, nationality or geography, Americans – particularly New Yorkers – have more confidence in their invincibility.

Of course, there are different versions of swing-flamenco swings, for example – but the version on which jazz is built comes from the rhythm of American life, particularly black urban speech and body rhythms. The entire city of New York swings, that's no hype. Jazz reflects the complexity of the American heartbeat better than any other art form and New York reflects the complexity of America more than any other city. "New York is the hippest city in the world," the joke goes: "It's so hip they named it twice ... New York, New York."

Jimmy Cleveland once said about Los Angeles: "It's hard to play the blues looking at a palm tree." And a trumpet-player friend of mine, who shall remain nameless, groaned after plodding through a set with a French rhythm section: "The quality of life may be better in Paris than New York, but life isn't everything."

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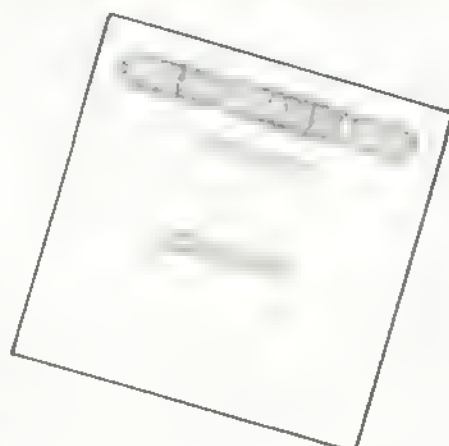
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# BUHAINA'S BEAT



ART BLAKEY, at sixty-five, white haired and featuring a hearing aid, still comes on like a yearling. Maybe surrounding himself with young players keeps him young; maybe it's his total belief in what he's doing. He's just got married again - his thirteenth child is on the way - and is setting himself up as an agent because: "I'd like to see to it that jazz gets a fair shake" He'll still be leading the Jazz Messengers, of course. "I'll play drums until Mother Nature tells me different. I'll retire when I'm six foot under," he chuckles.

Born in Pittsburgh during the Depression, Art worked in the coal mines by day and played piano at night until exposure to Errol Garner caused him to give up and switch to drums. He didn't get much encouragement at home.

"When my father saw those drums he was mad. 'Boy, are you stupid? Don't you know nobody makes any money on their ass

but a shoemaker?'" He taught himself to play and, judging by his reminiscences, was literally knocked into shape by a succession of master drummers.

"In the days when I was coming along, I told Chick Webb that I was a drummer. He said, 'Oh, a drummer, huh? Bring your drums down to the dressing-room'. So I said, yessir Mister Webb, and I had the bandboy bring my drums down. I thought I was The Big Shit because I could twirl sticks and throw them in the air. Chick came in the room and said, 'First thing I wanna tell you is the rhythm is not in the air, it's on the hides. Now make a roll'. So I made what I thought was a roll. He walked to the door, turned back, looked at me, and said, 'Shee-it!' Bam - slammed the door. I started crying, the whole band looking at me. But I needed it.

"Next day I went to the theatre again. 'All right', said Chick. 'You wanna learn how to play the drums?'. Sure do. He put the metronome on 'One, two. 'Start rolling and roll to a hundred



By the time I'd rolled to twenty seemed like my wrists were gonna break! That's how I learned.

"When I was at the Apollo in New York, Chick came in to give me some advice. I was playing a show, playing for chorus girls and everything. Chick said, 'Son — don't try and read all the music. Take some and leave some, and when you get in trouble — roll!'."

"Big Sid Catlett came to the Apollo to see me, too. I was with Smack up on stage and I thought I was so hip — eighteen, New York, playing with Fletcher Henderson, big head. I had on a blue uniform jacket, black tuxedo pants, bow-tie, and I had in my pocket a half-pint of gin and a straw. I'm wearing dark glasses and I'm playing and drinking a little bit of gin."

"I came off the stage and Big Sid is standing back there with Gene Krupa. Big Sid says, 'Kid, you were just wonderful!' and he picked me up — and then he felt this bottle. He says, 'What?'. He put me down and he hit me. *Wham!* Knocked me unconscious, poured some water on me, woke me up and said, 'As long as you've got a hole in your derriere, if I ever catch you drinking, smoking, using any kinda dope, I'm gonna bust your skull! Understand me?' I said, yessir! I don't drink. It's nonsense. He was right."

"Billy Eckstine bought me my first real set of drums. I came to work one day, came in the back of the club to rehearsal, and there was a big fire back there outside. My drums was on fire! I ran inside to tell the band. They just stood there. 'What now? Whatcha talkin' about?' My drums are on fire! Who did it? B. says, 'Well, you can't whip the whole band. There's twenty of us. Bird, did you do this?' Bird says not guilty. Then they took me inside — a brand new set of drums, pre-war cymbals. I just started crying. I'd forgot it was my birthday. My dumb ass!"

Art has strong feelings about drum teachers.

"The majority of kids I hear across the country sound like they've come off a conveyor belt. They've cut off their originality, or the teacher has, instead of giving the kids freedom to go ahead and find their own way. I think the best way to learn anything is by doing. There isn't a certain way to do nothing. There ain't no set way. Everybody's different. You play it the best way it is for you, whatever way you can get to it."

Art has seen the whole process, from unseasoned kids to despairing veterans, and somehow managed to stay enthusiastic.

"For some reason, musicians stop thinking positive. So many of them get discouraged. Coleman Hawkins had money but he didn't get the recognition from the people. Ben Webster, Don Byas, same thing. They just went home and died. That's how they felt about it. Lester Young let himself die. He has to see this thing stolen from him and everybody make money off it. He wasn't making it. He told me he didn't expect to live past fifty, couldn't make a living, couldn't even feed himself, it's better for him to go on and split. I wish he'd lived for his son if not for his music. Last time I saw Pres, he was going into Birdland and he had his little boy on his back. Both in brown suits and red sneakers with white soles, the darndest thing you ever saw. That was a classic."

"Pres was an original, the way he'd stand up there, the way he would talk. He was invited to the White House to meet President Truman. He didn't like Truman but he didn't stand up and say nothin', you know, run off his mouth. Then they said, 'Mr. President, we want you to meet the President of the Saxophone' — and the President came over and stuck his hand out to shake hands. Pres backed away, said, 'Nicely, nicely!' I understood what he was saying. One time when he was going out the studio door, Poppa Jo Jones says, 'What time do we go back in?' So Pres looked at his watch and says, 'A deuce of bells a ding dong'."

"Poppa Jo's been very sick for the last two or three years. I've gotta get to him right away. He's terminally ill and he's frightened. Boy, when you come face to face with it, it's a different thing. People criticised Charlie Mingus but they don't know, they've never faced death. He had Lou Gehrig's Disease and he was turning into stone inside. I think he did a damn good job."

Art keeps fit by walking a couple of miles a day but has to

Blakey — 1964, 1972 & '80s





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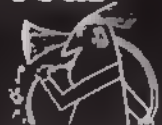
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watch his weight because he loves to eat.

"Drums is a physical instrument and I thank God for that because it's kept me alive. Just to keep moving keeps your heart in shape. When I play, I have a ball!"

Apart from music, he has a wide range of interests, from law to politics to chess.

"I love to play chess, but I'm the world's worst chess player. I think I could've been good at it but Thelonious Monk taught me how to play."

One of Art's most endearing qualities is his candour. He's quite frank about those sessions, *The Jazz Messengers With Thelonious Monk*, for example, on which his time went up and down. Criticism rolls off him because he already knows when he's playing well and when he isn't.

"I don't care what people write about me just so they spell my name right. Opinions are like assholes — everybody's got one."

Candour is also something that he respects in others.

"Monk told it exactly like it was. We went on a TV show with Steve Allen and he was talking about Thelonious Monk's house and how he had a piano in the kitchen, a baby grand, and in his writing room a spinnet piano with music piled on top to the ceiling. Lady Day's picture's up there because when he laid down he liked to look at Lady Day. So Monk says, 'Did you bring us down here to talk about my house or did you bring us here to play music?'. Bloop! That made sense to me. Miles is the same. Cats come up to Miles, hugging him. 'Hey, Miles — hey baby, gonna give me a gig?' And Miles says, 'Doin' what?'."

Junior Jazz Messengers soon find that Art, far from a fossilised father figure, is still a source of inspiration.

Wynton Marsalis. "It's ironic, man — before I played with Tony Williams, I'd never really listened to Art to hear what he was playing. It's a lot hipper than I thought it was. You hear Art play threes on four — he was one of the first drummers to do that. I like Art's way of playing is so scientific and so natural at the same time."

The business of recruiting new sidemen — at its most cryptic with Miles, and elsewhere often a matter of hometown partialities — has been increasingly left in the hands of the current band. Wynton Marsalis, for example, put in his own New Orleans replacements when he left but back in the Fifties Art did some chasing for himself.

"I was in Canada with Maynard Ferguson," Wayne Shorter recalled. "Art was on the same bill. Lee Morgan came running across the bandstand hollering that Hank Mobley hadn't shown up. 'Hey! Hank's done it again!'. I went back and saw Art Blakey and he said just one sentence. 'You got eyes?' I said yeah, I got eyes but I'd only been with Maynard for four weeks and that would've been disloyal. Like hello goodbye. So, later, Maynard gets a call from Art way down in French Lick, Indiana. 'Look, we're in trouble. We don't have a sax player and you know Wayne ain't gonna stay with you too long because he's a small group man'."

Shorter joined the Jazz Messengers in 1959 and stayed for five happy years... before Miles got on his case and bushwhacked Art Blakey.

"I'd be playing at Birdland with Art and Lee would say 'Miles is here'. I'd say where? 'In that corner. You won't see him. Miles is checkin' Shorter out'. Lee was always starting things. He says that loud so Art could hear and nod his head like 'I know what's happenin'."

Ex-Messengers always agree that their stints in Blakey's boot camp were the most fun. Shorter again. "Art's so enthusiastic. He wants to be everything. He's still like that. When it's six a.m. and everybody's tired, he says, 'Let's go over Thelonious Monk's house. He should be up by now'."

Johnny Griffin, another moving party, responded like a flash-fire to the subject of Buhaina. "Learn to pace myself? I never learned how to pace myself with *him*! He'd make one of those rolls and say, 'No — you can't stop yourself *now*!' Blam! We always had this competition, front line against the rhythm section, so it was always *war*!"

"One time, I was working six days a week with Thelonious and Monday nights in Birdland with Philly Joe and Wilbur Ware and Red Garland, like that. This was Labor Day, the first day that I'd had off, so I said I was gonna repair my body a little





Blakey 1981

bit, not gonna drink, just gonna relax. Well, I went by Art Blakey's house and we got in an argument. He started talking about the drums and I said, who needs drums makin' all that noise? I play my saxophone, I don't need no drums. We started drinking, of course. Friendly conversation but gettin' loud. Babs Gonzales comes in and he starts adding a little spice to it to get us going and we end up making a fifty-dollar bet.

"The Baroness called up to know what was going on so we said we had this bet and we were goin' uptown to 155th Street in Harlem to this joint and Art Blakey was gonna make me spit blood, or I was gonna make him throw away his drumsticks. She came by and picked us up in her convertible Bentley — Babs, Art Blakey and myself — and we go in the club. Ram Ramirez, the man who wrote 'Loverman', he's in there with his organ trio. He's got his nice programme goin' and here come the maniacs! He says, 'Oh, a jam session with the organ.' We tell him we don't want no organ — just the saxophone and the drums. We get up on the stage and start blowin', both of us out of our minds. A stick slips out of Art Blakey's hand — I say, *I win the fifty dollars!* 'No, no, no, no!'. I gotta fight him now to win the fifty dollars! OK — it was a slip, so we go on blowing' till Ram's gotta go back on.

"We decide to go by Count Basie's. That's a good place to go, good crowd. Lockjaw's working there with Shirley Scott, so when they see me with my horn they say, 'Oh — we're gonna have a tenor battle! Griffin and Lock!'. I'm not thinking about Lock at this time. All I'm thinking about is beating Art Blakey out of his fifty dollars. So we started to playing. Right to this day I don't know what happened to that fifty dollars. Don't remember how the evening ended. It's all a haze. All I remember is that the next day I was trembling so much I had to have a drink because I was playing with Monk at the Five Spot."

As a leader, Art has never been much of a disciplinarian.

"If a guy can play, he can get away with anything. I'm a sucker for that. All I wanna do is hear him play. He's worth it."

One of his personal summits was the Art Blakey Night at the Kool Jazz Festival in 1981. Assembling the Jazz Messengers past and present, the concert fielded Johnny Griffin, Jackie McLean, Billy Harper, Bobby Watson, Bill Hardman, Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Walter Davis and Cedar Walton — and knocked Carnegie Hall on its collective ass.

"You saw that?" says Art enthusiastically. "Jesus Christ, what a night! I saw guys I hadn't seen for years! They'd got fat and changed. Donald Byrd was twice the size of me! I looked at him and said, that's *you*? Freddie Hubbard was up there bustin' outa his suit. Somebody said we shoulda been called Art Blakey & The Jazz Bellybands."

Brian Case

Jazz Messengers — 1981 style. Left to right: Bill Pierce, Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson and Blakey.





# ALTERATIONS

UNTIL I saw Alterations play, most improvised music had seemed to me to be an inflexibly serious enterprise: nothing too wrong about that, perhaps, at a time when most music of any sort is played either for laughs or the facile gratification of the performers.

After 40 minutes of watching Alterations tamper and tinker with an apparently limitless number of instruments – from tiny clockwork toys to pianos, saxophones and guitars – I realised how improvisation could shed rigidity and po-faced virtuosity without sacrificing its best qualities.

If Alterations behaved in ways that were sometimes sacrilegious and hilarious, they were still serious about it.

Such Damaskan experiences are, I suppose, chapter headings in every fan's diary. But something about this group of four English musicians from divergent musical backgrounds – who still pursue very different courses outside the informal structure of Alterations – remains unique among the hundreds of casual and regular improvising troupes. Because their clash of ideas and temperaments is force-fed on many fascinations with many popular and ethnic musics, Alterations is a notion in a continuous state of flux. They have no point to fix on.

The condition is encouraged by their irregular performances. They have never had the opportunity to fall into the kind of creative stasis which a cultural establishment has fostered in a group like the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Yet the music you're likely to hear in an Alterations set probably won't be the impenetrable log-jam of directions which the foregoing might suggest: they are improvisers who love songs, tunes and simplicity – even identifiable rhythms! – besides more familiar "exploration of occasion".

Steve Beresford, Peter Cusack, Terry Day and David Toop have played as Alterations since 1978. Beresford has worked with pop groups and improvising outfits since his schooldays, with "idiots and geniuses and everything between"; a sceptic who is mellowing a little, he shares with the studious, precisely articulate Toop a daunting knowledge of seemingly every area of music. His frequent colleague as a producer and organiser, Toop's writing and research have helped him diagnose the disparate beauty of African flute music and Screamin' Jay Hawkins; if pressed, he will still confess to admiring the Beach Boys.

Terry Day might be amiably described as a veteran of alternative musics, a jazz drummer of long experience with an abiding interest in poetry; Peter Cusack, whom I once heard preface a solo guitar

set with a tape of a single plate breaking, is the quietest of the four, with a deep affection for Greek music and the sounds of birds and frogs.

Hagiography could take up pages with four such packed histories as these. But why, exactly, do Alterations sound as they do? Though they play scores of possible instruments in a performance it wouldn't be unfair to group their main roles around – keyboards/brass/bass (Beresford), guitars/bazouki (Cusack), drums/reeds (Day), flutes/guitars/bass/piano (Toop).

Toop: "We're interested in being entertainers, compared with other improvising groups. That's something we've definitely worked on as we've progressed, and we refer to a lot of different types of music. We're not afraid to introduce time playing. Or chord sequences, or playing together.

"We are more accessible in this sphere. In Germany we can support on rock & roll gigs which is virtually out of the question here. We'd probably be seen as too old."

It's late summer 1983 and I'm talking with the old chaps in Steve's kitchen. An edgy, suitably improvised conversation leapfrogs around more topics than can be recounted here. But trying to isolate certain aspects of the group's approach does provide an insight into a philoso-

phy of playing which some might deem perversely open-ended. Question: how is the comfort of familiarity avoided?

Cusack: "I don't think this group has ever had that problem. It's probably the way we see the group not just as the sole aspect of our musical life. We all work in lots of different projects. And Alterations works in such a way that new ideas can always be brought in and because that's always happening, there's always something to throw it off a logical line."

Day: "We all know ourselves musically as individuals, but together the four of us make a different situation. I could do a duo with Pete and it would be quite 'comfortable'."

Toop: "The tensions we have in the group these days are quite subtle: they usually involve somebody preventing you from doing something you wanted to do, by working against it or playing louder. That's something you get used to and you can develop your skills to be able to do what you want despite everything else that's going on."

Beresford: "Yeah. You buy a bigger amplifier."

Toop: "We work in bursts. Between times maybe Steve and I'll be working on a funk track and Peter and Terry may be working on some poetry or group music, and these things will come back into the group ... we might do a gig after a





by off and something'll happen, and you'll think - what is this?"

Do they ever feel lost in performance? How can that be dealt with?

Beresford: "Those are really limpid moments. I love those. People can go there and there and there in improvised music - but I like the bits in between, where they're not sure where they're going. I think that can produce some fantastic, more unconscious music. Obviously you try and work to prevent those wilting moments from coming in but they do come in at some point by their own volition. I wouldn't like to lose that because in a way it's the most spontaneous part of a performance."

Because there is no typical Alterations performance, I can't provide an adequate description of one. What might be happening at a particular moment may involve Beresford marching around the playing area with a euphonium, Toop measuring out a flute line with scientific care, Day murmuring verse and rustling at some cymbals and Cusack hammering on a guitar riff. Such tableaux sound cute or trivial and sliced out of context they may be. But Alterations have already tried and discarded the states of inertia that every group of any longevity will go through. How do they think the group has particularly changed?

Toop: "All four of us went through a dramatic change in our attitudes towards improvised music because of this group. Terry had stopped playing the drum kit, Peter and I had stopped playing the electric guitar and Steve would never play electric bass in improvised music

and these were quite dogmatic attitudes. But then these all started coming back in and, in the end, you think, well, I'll do anything I can do. Why not? It was apparent from the beginning that we had a flexibility that other improvising groups didn't have.

"I don't think any music can pretend to be the ultimate vehicle of musical freedom. At the beginning of the Seventies, the sort of stuff that Miles Davis was doing was spoken of as the ultimate freedom, doing whatever you want. And then you look at what happened... ultimate freedom, forget it."

And to the inevitable thorn: why does Britain lag so far behind Europe in even tolerating improvised music?

Day: "I've never been able to put my finger on it. After you've been playing this sort of music for some time you ask yourself - why don't people like this? You can have all the opportunities coming up to play in Europe and then you come back here and wait for a gig... I think the only healthy time really was the end of the Sixties for this sort of thing."

Toop: "One factor is class - a lot of musicians who were playing improvised music fifteen or twenty years ago came out of jazz and there's always been a class prejudice against jazz here. And the music's never been talked about seriously in this country to any great extent. I think fashion's got a lot to do with it because people are so stiff and stodgy here that it's only fashion which keeps them from ossifying - and this music's never been seen as being very fashionable. It started off as a protest against

fashion, in a way.

"It's also to do with having a very strong music press here which doesn't really go for this sort of music. Unlike, say, Italy, where you can have an attitude which says that if you like David Bowie you can also like Willem Breuker."

Cusack: "English dogmatism is much deeper. There's a strong tendency to compartmentalise things and any music which doesn't fit into a category doesn't get much of a chance. It's a particularly English phenomenon."

A year later, Alterations have just completed their third record. *Alterations* (1978) and *Up Your Sleeve* (1980) are patchwork live recordings: neither sound very clear and, although some of the music approximates the spirit of the group in performance, the absence of visuals and atmosphere inhibits the sound even more than is usual with improvising records. "My Favourite Animals" was made under studio conditions and the fifteen pieces clarify the most songful aspects of Alterations. Some of it ("Hank's Pantry") might almost be free jazz; some parts, like the opening "Sleeping Beauty", are positively lyrical. The fiercest juxtapositions are made between tracks rather than within them.

I met Steve and David for an update shortly before the LP was made. Was there a suggestion, with a record of tunes in the offing, that the group is moving away from improvised music *per se*?

Toop: "A bit. Well, I dunno... I can't make up my mind. There's so much that's informed by working in improvised music that that sensibility will always remain. I think we may be less inhibited now. If it suddenly becomes psychedelic then everybody doesn't instantly retract like tortoises! References change as we go along but the way of playing stays very much the same, I think."

Beresford: "I think what's happened with Alterations is that everything's become more clear. This clash of clarities."

But is it even fair for such a group to make records, to try and pin down what only truly comes alive in performance?

Toop: "It's worth trying because records are so much a part of our musical culture. You have to accept the limitations and being a purist about it is a bit silly. There are people who can't get to see the group but would like to hear the music."

You may be disappointed that there is no attempt here to contextualise Alterations and their "influence" in improvised music; but they possess no such status. As they insist, they are part of no scene. Instead of rejecting history, they ransack its resources. A new Alterations performance puts four different preferences on to a fresh page.

When Steve Beresford says "the situation's always been four individuals who are surprising each other", he comes as close as any to the heart of Alterations.

ALFRED CHILL

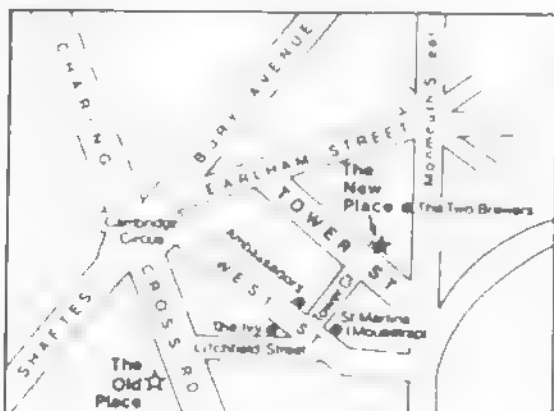




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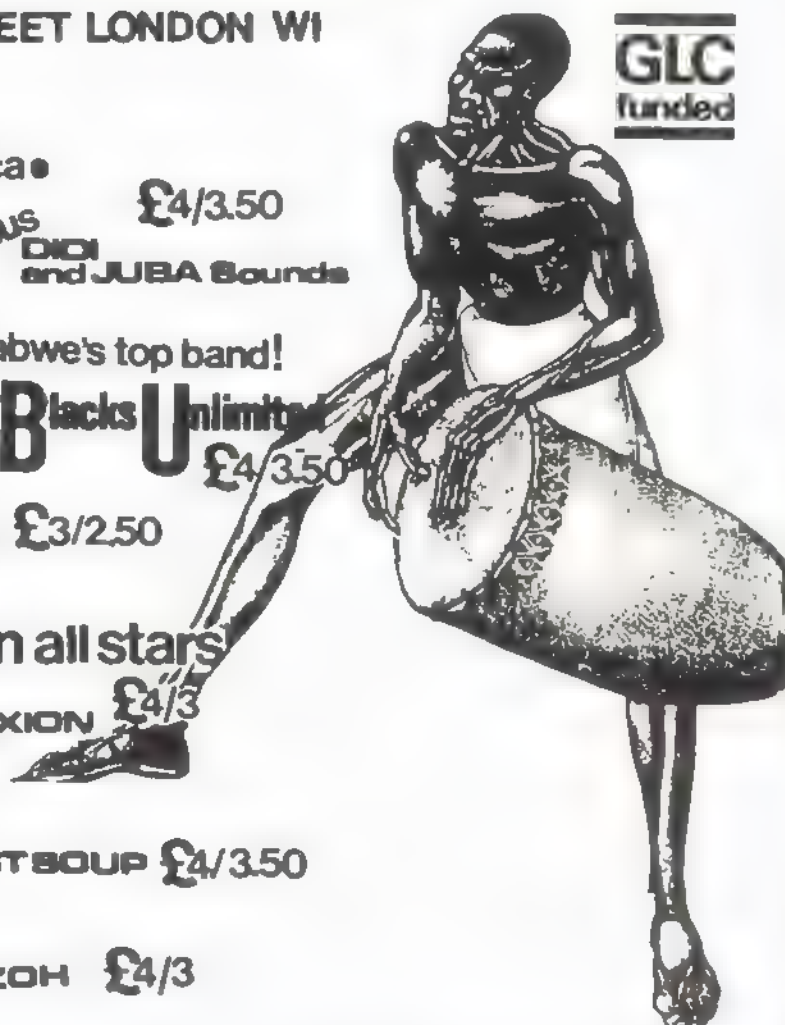
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## WEST END BLUES/ WEATHER BIRD

According to one school of thought, jazz worth listening to barely existed before "West End Blues". At best, there was only a rhythmically stumbling, harmonically vague and crudely organised folk music. Until Louis Armstrong came along and showed the way of the future.

It's an exaggeration, of course, but it has considerable relevance for the way the music developed during the Thirties, Forties and Fifties. The great majority of memorable moments in the recorded jazz of those decades arose from brilliantly executed and deeply felt statements by improvising soloists. On the other hand, later developments have made it clear that throughout jazz history, the solo statements existed within an indispensable framework of collective creation. However, it is also true that even the post-1960 trends drew much of their strength from the recent past and players contributing to the new context were well aware of the specific tradition of their instruments.

That tradition was established by Armstrong. Certainly it had started before his ascendancy, indeed some years before jazz began to be recorded, and there were other important musicians who furthered it during the Twenties. But it was Armstrong who set the seal on the soloist's supremacy. As with the arrival of Charlie Parker two decades later, the reaction of other players was either delight or trepidation. It was impossible merely to ignore the implications. Naturally not everyone who said "Count me in" made it on to the team but those who actually chose to be counted out could still learn a decent living playing less demanding music – at least until the Depression.

Of course, it's always a mistake to single out one track as symbolising a particular trend, or even the culmination of that trend, for there are always others which tell the same story or bring





out different aspects of the story. Armstrong had been audibly heading in this direction ever since he started recording with the King Oliver band and, although playing a secondary role for the most part, his few solos with Oliver (especially on "Tears", cut nearly five years before "West End Blues") show him straining at the collective leash of New Orleans discipline. As soon as he became a member of the Fletcher Henderson orchestra, he was simultaneously spreading rhythm around through prolific freelance recording with Clarence Williams and with Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and sundry other blues singers – which provides evidence of the enthusiasm of fellow musicians but also of Louie's overwhelming ability in a variety of contexts. The ambitiousness of his ideas and the fluency of execution might well have caused the comment actually provoked by Parker, "Man, that horn ain't supposed to sound that fast!"

When it comes to the records made from 1925 onwards with his own Hot Five, Hot Seven and Savoy Ballroom Five (the Chicago Savoy, that is), Armstrong's advances over his contemporaries stand out a mile. I had intended, like any properly house-trained critic, to make notes on a few salient tracks but the man's extraordinary gifts make nonsense of such an approach (and, incidentally, point up the one disadvantage of compilation albums of singles – namely, that the more excellent the music, the harder it is to take in the individual delights of each track). Not every one of his late Twenties' sides has equal value as a vehicle for Armstrong but each one contains some startling invention, or some original phrase which has by now been absorbed into the communal language. Not for nothing did Miles Davis say, "You know you can't play anything on a horn that Louis hasn't played."

How he did it is, in one sense, as much of a mystery as it is with anyone else who makes a

breakthrough on several levels at once. He clearly had an intimate acquaintance with the blues heritage and had developed equally well a great feel for the rules of European melody and harmony (his ear was so good that, quite early on, he can sometimes be heard implying passing chords that the rest of the band isn't even aware of). To have found a new and more profound connection between academic music and black folk music was, in itself, an amazing achievement but, in addition, Armstrong rediscovered a more African influence rhythmic approach, which came to be called "swinging". Taking his lead probably from fellow cornettist Oliver (who, more than most other New Orleans players, seemed to have the germ of this style in his own work, Louie's timing became so precise that he could impart an effortless flow of rhythmic light and shade seemingly totally independent of the rhythm section – indeed, the most striking demonstrations often come when the rhythm section isn't playing, as in the famous introduction to "West End Blues" which, paradoxically, swings even though it's technically out of tempo).

The imperious authority of Armstrong's playing here has often been attributed to the fact that he had just begun using the trumpet rather than cornet, although his expressive tone was already so flexible that I think only a brass player would ever notice the slight difference. But it was not the instrument so much as the stunning conception of what he played which made this introduction such a landmark. Louie himself had to learn it and repeat it in public, as many others attempted to – including Charlie Parker who, by quoting it in tempo on his live recordings, brought out its oblique distillation of the standard twelve bar blues sequence.

The dramatic contrast between this intro and the delicate, simply stated theme gives way to the mournful mood of a medium slow tempo and

this mood also informs the brief trombone solo and the calm and responsive chorus shared by clarinet and scat vocal. Revealingly, whereas other slow blues of this period such as "I'm Not Rough" or "Gully Low Blues" (and its less perfect alternate version "S.O.L. Blues") are enhanced by Louie's readings of the lyrics, on this occasion scat singing (in rotation of a plunger mutes) is the only kind guaranteed not to detract from the overall performance. This is capped by an astonishing final trumpet chorus which not only reorganises ideas already tried out in "Gully Low" and "S.O.L." but manages to combine the authority of the intro with a no longer bona fide but explicit and passionate blues sermon.

Thrilling though it is, this represents only one side of Armstrong's rather complex personality and it's decried by the exhilarating "Weather Bird", recorded as a duet with pianist Earl Hines. If serious jazz is thought of in competitive terms, then Hines was probably the only musician in the US at the time who could play in the same arena with Louie and the way this performance camouflages an exchange of ideas and then ones seems to support such an interpretation. On the other hand, the really idea that came up in the exchange – and this is why the participants bounce off each other rhythmically – make the result a playful and happy, not an exhibition match.

Again, if the new era prompted by Armstrong is considered in cutting test terms, it would appear highly significant that there is no history-making performances, both composed material written by King Oliver. But there is more than a hint of homage to Oliver especially in the way the two main themes are developed. And surely, the man who first brought commercial New Orleans music to a national audience, the way his former protégé had raised the music to a new level of artistry.

Brian Priestley



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# BOOK REVIEWS

## JAZZ TALK by Robert D. Rusch (LYLE STUART, NEW JERSEY, \$14.95)

Although we are now more than a generation away from the mid Sixties, it seems that where Afro American music is concerned, it is the achievements of the music from that period that have become the criteria for all subsequent developments. This attests to the importance and vitality of the great music created at the time which was a vivid reflection of the intense cultural and political upheavals sweeping through the black American communities.

In view of the importance of the musical achievements of the Sixties, it isn't surprising to find an ever increasing number of books and articles dealing with this period. *Jazz Talk* by Robert D. Rusch, who founded *Cadence* magazine in 1976, is really a case in point being, in Mr Rusch's words, "a collection of conversations with ten jazz masters, the majority of whom came to prominence in the Sixties. Most of the 'conversations' have been previously published in *Cadence* but are presented in this form."

*Jazz Talk* is divided into two parts. The first part contains ten interviews which take up 100 pages while the second part, the interview with Bill Dixon, takes up 50 pages.

In the first conversations, which include

Freddie Hubbard, Milt Jackson, Cecil Taylor and Art Blakey, fascinating and interesting facts emerge. However, they are not really developed enough, therefore overall leaving the reader dissatisfied and adding relatively little to a better understanding of these artists' works.

When talking to Art Blakey, for instance, Mr Rusch touches on John Gilmore (long term mainstay of Sun Ra's Arkestra) joining the Jazz Messengers, touring the Southern States in the Forties and Blakey's social views. And, speaking about jazz groups, Blakey says "it's really freedom, it's spiritual, you see democracy in its truest form, socialism in its truest form... there's everything there". Interesting though this is, Mr Rusch does not manage to get Blakey to develop these points and succeeds only in drawing out a series of somewhat disconnected anecdotes which do little to bring the music's development into a clearer perspective. Much the same can be said for the other eight brief conversations.

When we come to the Bill Dixon interview, it is a different matter altogether. That is why I say that this is really two books. For this is a great piece of jazz journalism. Rusch begins the piece by explaining how the interview came about and the difficulties he encountered when putting the original interview into context. It soon becomes obvious that Rusch knows and appreciates the

importance of Bill Dixon's valuable contribution to the music, beginning in the early Sixties when he was one of the initiators of the "new" music emerging from the New York underground. What's important here, though, is that Rusch's probing and probing draws out from Dixon explanations of his ideas and motivation which succeeds in giving meanings to the life and work of this important artist. He explains how he became involved with the music, why he took up trumpet and much about his attitude to the music establishment. What becomes clear is much of Dixon's social and political beliefs. He vividly explains his relationship with Archie Shepp and Cecil Taylor, adding a new dimension to his work with both of these great artists and later helps to dispel much of the mystique surrounding the famous "October Revolution" which gave one of the first public platforms to the second wave warriors of the "new" music in the early Sixties.

One may not agree with Dixon's reasons, or his version of events, but Rusch's masterly handling of this interview enables the reader to reach his or her own conclusions by presenting a comprehensive, revealing and truly "insightful" portrait.

Jan Diakow

*Jazz Talk* is published by Lyle Stuart Inc, 120 Enterprise Avenue, Secaucus, New Jersey 07094, USA.

## THE FREEDOM PRINCIPLE: JAZZ AFTER 1958 by John Litweiler (WILLIAM MORROW & CO, NEW YORK, \$15.95)

IN THIS book we have an enthusiastic portrait of a music in motion. This critical survey studies the ideas, creations and creators of the movement that evolved an alternative vehicle of expression, growing out of bebop and hard bop styles, while remaining open to many non-traditional influences. This movement triggered a staggering series of explosions that changed the face of the music, vibrations of which are still felt today.

From the opening paragraph you encounter Litweiler's difficulty in labelling his subject. He mentions the artists' unwillingness to accept limiting terms. He concludes 'Free Jazz is not necessarily an accurate or satisfactory label, but it's a label that has at least survived' (p13).

He then differentiates between freedom with a small 'f' and Freedom as a designation of stylistic development. He talks about freedom as an integral part of jazz from its beginnings, citing Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Art Tatum and their early innovations. The emergence of bop and hard-bop consolidated all that had come before and offered new innovations. Creative energy was in full flow.

He identifies the contributions of Parker, Gillespie, Navarro, Powell, especially as soloists while drawing parallels to the work of Tristano, Miles Davis (*Birth of Cool*) and the first rumblings of 'Third Stream' via the Modern Jazz Quartet. By contrast he elaborates on the 'polyphonic interplay' (p18) of Max Roach, Art Blakey, Horace Silver and Clifford Brown and others to distinguish hard-bop.

On this bridge, the reader crosses over to

Monk and his distinct rhythmic and harmonic explorations. Discussions on Herbie Nichols, Charles Mingus and Lennie Tristano follow. As the chapter ends the evolutionary stage is set but the breakthrough cast has yet to arrive. 'Thus the era of Free Jazz does not begin with these early successes; indeed the need for freedom was... only sensed by a nineteen year old saxophonist in Texas... 1,500 miles from the center of the jazz world.'

Freedom is what makes jazz music what it is. Freedom is the hallmark of the African American experience to which this music speaks. The cultural awareness of the creators of this music is developed to a high degree. These musicians are seeking, through organic process, to express deep emotions and impart information in a language that is vast though, at times, unfamiliar to virgin ears. Additionally, the artists are continuously redefining and refining, through musical exchange, human interaction. In New York City the focus on the 'gig' was ever present. We discover as the book continues that in other places other people had a strong sense of something else.

Ornette Coleman and his school was that something else. If anything, Ornette Coleman was being absolutely true to the tradition of his music. He went after the music he heard in his heart and that, alone, sent shock-waves to all within an ear's reach. This included the musicians who studied and worked with him, so many of whom continue to produce those waves.

When Ornette brought his sound to NYC, he brought it intact. He laid the 'New Thing' at the steps of the temple. The subsequent earthquake is history and legend. One of my favourites is a quote from saxophonist Jimmy Lyons 'I thought it sounded like country, western music.' It did but whose country and which western? Ornette's early vision previewed a truly world-music possibility and he did it within the jazz context. And without New York.

*The Freedom Principle* is distinguished by its richness of detail on the outside (of NYC) stimuli descending on the jazz centre. Litweiler lives and works in Chicago and has a true sense of what is going on outside New York City. In terms of the music's history, the descent was similar to the spreading of the music to the mid-west in the early century, from New Orleans via the Mississippi River.

After Coleman he devotes a chapter to Eric Dolphy, another outsider. The author does not neglect the parallel movements in NYC, tracing Coltrane, Miles and modal jazz, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, pop-jazz and fusion. These are informative and thoughtful but the strength of the book is in the chapters on Sun Ra, the AACM and St Louis, free jazz in Europe and internationally by Americans and others, and the chapter on Roscoe Mitchell, Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith and Joseph Jarman. The book concludes with a chapter on the music today which is up to date and knowledgeable—especially his discussion of Henry Threadgill and other original and derivative players.

When the independent discoveries of Muhal Richard Abrams and Chicago's AACM with supporting forces of BAG of St Louis, hit NYC more shock-waves and of a different sort were felt. Litweiler shines here, giving us a glimpse of the true function of a music reporter. He takes inspiration from his subject and with intimate detail transmutes the sound into informative statements. Considering the depth of his connection to the AACM and surrounding activities, you get the feeling that a whole book should be dedicated to the subject.

This book is useful as it gives complete coverage to the subject for the uninitiated and has the depth for followers of the music to gain new understandings.

Brian Auerbach

*The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958* is published by William Morrow & Co, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, USA.







In this rare interview with poet, playwright and Black Liberation Movement activist AMIRI BARAKA, Val Wilmer offers an insight into his immeasurable contribution to twentieth-century Afro-American thought and his "commitment to humanity" in building the Black New World.

# AMIRI BARAKA

IF YOU want to know what it was like—what it was *really* like—in the days when the honking tenor players ruled the roost, there's a story about saxophonist Lynn Hope you should read.

It's called "The Screamers" and tells of a night when the beturbaned legendary tore apart the Northern industrial city of Newark, New Jersey. It brings alive the atmosphere of the joints where raunchy r & b horns operated, describes the audience's inter-relations—their smell, even. And behind it all, the constant presence of the city's overseer cops.

The story comes in a book called *Tales* written by Amiri Baraka, then known as LeRoi Jones. He grew up in Newark, knows the place and the music inside out. His primary work has been as poet, playwright and activist in the Black Liberation Movement but his writing, whether concerned directly with music or only peripherally, has always offered unparalleled insight into its feeling and function and the conditions that surround its being.

Baraka's classic, *Blues People*, published in 1963, advanced the theory that African-American music changes as the people changed. It was, incredibly, the first full-length work on the music from a Black writer (Langston Hughes had previously written a jazz primer for children). *Blues People* was followed by the compilation *Black Music* and there were other writings about music in various Baraka Jones anthologies. Now he is putting the finishing touches to a substantial study of John Coltrane which promises to be as significant as *Blues People*.

On his fiftieth birthday, two months ago, Max Roach and Archie Shepp were among the many luminaries of Black American music who paid him tribute at a special concert. His play—*Primitree World*, about musicians surviving World War Three—has been running at New York's Sweet Basil Club with music by David Murray.

Baraka, who visited London earlier this year for the Third Black Book Fair, is anxious to explain that when he writes

about music he does so from the perspective of a listener, never an "authority" nor, despite an early flirtation with the trumpet, a musician.

"The best commentary I know on music was written by W.E.B. Du Bois [see footnote]. He wasn't a musician but in *The Souls of Black Folk* the whole thing he did called 'Of the Sorrow Songs' was really a basis for an analysis of the music from then on."

As Baraka pointed out, a strong focus on music exists in the work of all major Black authors. He cited Frederick Douglass's *Slave Narratives* and the works of Langston Hughes; to these could be added writers with concerns as diverse as Ntozake Shange, Ralph Ellison, Toni Cade Bambara.

"They're all influenced by it because music is the nature of our culture."

"Our culture exists in a very specific musical framework. And the reason why it's so specific is because it's in contrast to the larger one. People might exist in the larger one and not even know it. I'm talking about Americans. But for the Afro-Americans, our particular music exists in such relief to the other and is so much more emphasised in the community because one of the only things Black people can get a chance to do is to play music."

When Baraka, as LeRoi Jones, appeared in Greenwich Village, New

York, at the tail-end of the Beat era, he was quickly noticed as a writer to be reckoned with. His poetry and plays like *Dutchman* combined the zappy anarchism of the Beats with growing Black anger. At its most dramatic, there was a lot of hatred in his work; at its most passionate, a lot of love. In his recent autobiography he described the painful processes he went through during this period and his decision to move away from the white world to work on the building at home—"Home" meaning both the Black community and Newark itself specifically.

But, when he changed his politics, Baraka was written out of many history books. He has received countless awards and fellowships, taught at several universities, yet in some circles is still seen as a crazy-headed agitator hellbent on getting his ass put in jail.

Sadly, he is one of the best-kept secrets in the "jazz" world, a world where his profound analysis is sorely needed. Always provocative, his words formed an appropriate literary backdrop to the tumult that was the Sixties' *New Wave*, spearheaded by Coltrane, Coleman, Shepp, Sun Ra and Taylor. He has appeared in London three times recently, taking time off from his post as Associate Professor of Africana Studies at New York's Stony Brook University.

The Coltrane book, long in gestation,

Amiri Baraka (right) with Kenyan writer and activist Ngugi wa Th'iong'o and Somali author Nuruddin Farrah





has not been without its problems. Baraka used Marxist analysis in his attempt to study Coltrane by situating him in his place as a member of the working class. His publisher called this "too political". A compromise has now been reached and the book will be out in 1985.

Baraka stresses that it is not a biography. "I'm trying to write a theory of art, you know - why the music sounds the way it does at any given time and why it changes. The way I outline my approach to it can't be done without a very close political analysis as well. Basic bourgeois theory says that everything is disconnected which is not true. Everything is connected - even if you don't know how.

"Take today: if you talk about the emergence of reggae, for instance. You say, well, how come reggae developed where before there was calypso or some-

Langston Hughes and friend in Harlem, 1962

thing like that? What I do is line up a whole series of historical facts that occur at the same time - what was happening in painting, in dance, in politics. And with that kind of approach try to zero in on all the things that possibly create a new form. Because the new form will be distinct from the old form in several ways. I try to see what has changed and then try to isolate what caused that change."

This being so, it seemed like he might have a good explanation for why the music, once so revolutionary in the Sixties and early Seventies, seems to be going backwards - not so much a part of a consolidating process where the roots are examined and *cared* for but in what often seems a careless way - reactionary almost.

"Really it's the same thing that's happening generally in society: there's a

reorganising. In *Blues People* I explained how the music changed as the people changed. The Black Liberation Movement was attacked in the Sixties and Seventies and our leadership destroyed. But in that stopping of that movement you'll notice also that the music goes through some severe changes. On the one hand it gets to be ultra metaphysical where you get a lot of 'Om m-m-m-m' in it. And then there's the development of a whole lot of non-blues-oriented 'avant garde'.

"The whole looking back at the roots is a re-grouping. It's a reaching back for the elements that will make certain that the music itself doesn't disappear. At this point the music is going through a struggle between those who want to make it an appendage of European concert music and the others who are relating it to the whole Afro-American ex-









# ON THE RECORD

## Jerry Wexler

The Soulful Sixties — Wexler with Solomon Burke



**THE PLACE:** New York City, the editorial offices of *Billboard* magazine.

The year: 1951.

The subject: their "Race Records" chart which listed hits by black musicians.

The problem: "The term is derogatory. Can't we find something else to call it?"

The answer: "How about 'Rhythm and Blues'?"

The speaker: Jerry Wexler, a young reporter.

"In a way, I liked 'race'," he says, looking back. "It was upfront. But it was *perceived* as derogatory out there. I've often thought that if I had it to do over again, I might have preferred 'Rhythm and Gospel'."

In any case, having named it, Wexler would proceed to redefine the music and bring it to a mass white audience.

He began to produce in 1953 as a partner in Atlantic Records which, at the time, had two desks in a one-room office above Patsy's restaurant on 56th Street. At night, Wexler and Ahmet Ertegun pushed one desk against the wall and stacked the other on top of it ("that's how I got my bad back") while engineer Tom Dowd set up three mikes, one out in the airshaft if they needed reverb. They recorded Ray Charles ("What'd I Say"), Clyde McPhatter and The Drifters, Joe Turner and LaVern Baker in there.

"What mayonnaise!" Wexler was passing through Paris, praising sauces. After discussing the nuances between *gourmet* and *gourmand*, he raised a glass of 1967 Burgundy and proposed a toast: "Ah, France."

Then he burst into song. "The sun gonna shine through my back door someday." That's right, into song — an eight-bar blues. "That's home ground, my territory. I love little things that take music out of the ordinary. I love my out takes. I love four-bar bridges, too."

Eight-bar blues and four-bar bridges made room for more choruses on three-minute 78 rpms. "Remember, I'm from before LPs." His words tumble with the enthusiasm of a recent convert: "It was one-track mono. We cut four sides in three hours. 'Four in three' we called it. Union scale was \$40 per musician for a session. I'd call my secretary just before the three hours were up and ask if we had enough money to go overtime. In those days we produced music because we liked it. That was what I call the 'Column A' period."

Then came Column B. "Now there was one column for taste and another for the market. For a while they happened to coincide."

Atlantic expanded, signing Bobby Darin, Buffalo Springfield and English groups like King Crimson, Led Zeppelin and ultimately the Rolling Stones. At the beginning, Ertegun and Wexler co-produced everything. "We were probably too insecure to leave each other." He came in before noon, talked to distributors and disc jockeys, collected the money and they recorded three or four nights a week.

Eventually, the work had to be split. "Ahmet's function became crucial to the growth of the company, in terms of signing the artists and nursing them along. He liked jetting to the Riviera with Mick in the company plane. I was minding the store in the studio. I guess it was kind of an indulgence. People criticised me for inefficient use of my time. But *somebody* had to make those records."

Though Wexler signed people from Column B, he swears he never produced any of their records: "It's like trying to make love to a woman you can't stand. It's physically impossible. I





Wexler (far right) with Nesuhi and Ahmet Ertegun celebrating Atlantic's 25th anniversary in Paris, 1974

couldn't get it up."

He sliced some radishes, placed them on buttered *pain de campagne* and salted it with the solemnity of a toast: "Ahmet bought Ray Charles's contract for \$2000 in 1953 from a guy named Frank in Ft. Lauderdale of Swingtime Records. Ray came out of nowhere and suddenly started singing secular lyrics, the devil's words, to religious music. Nobody had done that before."

He produced Charles's first hits but minimises his own contribution. "Sometimes I'd say something brilliant, like, 'Should we try one a bit faster?' On 'Lonely Avenue' I was afraid the tempo was not going to hold. It was an extremely slow four to the bar. I said, 'Ray, don't you think we should have some eighths on the sock cymbal?' He said, 'No, Baby, we don't need it. That's just dressing.' The best lesson I ever learned. You need just enough to hold the groove and not lose the pocket. Ray is a walking textbook about music and recording—proportion, cadence, accent, texture, the depth of the mix."

"My 'secret' consisted of two words—Tommy and Dowd. I'd start, 'OK, Tommy, open the pots and let's see what we got.' Basically, I was just sitting there learning. I hate to downgrade the cult of producers but a lot of it is just mumbling and fumbling. All you have to do is hang in there long enough until the musicians and engineers get it right."

The coach can afford to be modest after he's won the game. You could build a baseball team of competitors who were flattened by the Wexler bulldozer. But, then, success in this business depends as much on power as taste. Wexler has both.

When Aretha Franklin's CBS contract lapsed ("I was watching it like a hawk"), he signed and brought her and Wilson Pickett ("In The Midnight Hour") south. It is considered one of his biggest contributions, though he minimises that, too: "I'm more or less Tolstoyan in this respect. I don't believe individuals change the course of history. It's being there when it happens. This was going to happen anyway."

He sampled the *saumon à l'oseille*.

"By the early Sixties our New York players were running out

of licks, our arrangers were out of ideas, and there was this rich musical tradition going relatively untapped in Memphis. There was Sam Phillips and Sun Records. Jim Stewart had started Stax with its wonderful house rhythm section—Booker T and The MGs. Integrated bands were the rule rather than the exception. They bound to happen first in the south. These were all small-town folks who ate the same food, played the same sports, had the same hobbies. There was a lot of mutual respect. White boys who played the blues grew up under the same influences as the black people. They all knew how to fix a carburettor, they had the same mud between their toes."

"After a while Muscle Shoals began to get the spillover. For some crazy reason this hick town with less than 100,000 people in the northwest corner of Alabama, about 120 miles from both Nashville and Memphis, had something like nine studios and the most incredible pool of musicians. So when Wilson Pickett wore out his welcome in Memphis, for various reasons having mostly to do with abrasiveness—he was *persona non grata* after a few months—we moved to Muscle Shoals which was sending out beepers to the world. They were tiny mono, two track studios built from spit and chewing gum and bailing wire. But they were into the real funk. We got very lucky in Muscle Shoals."

Wexler, the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland, grew up in Manhattan "delivering hooch to drunks and hanging out in Artie's poolroom". He became a millionaire when Warner Brothers purchased Atlantic. He produced Dusty Springfield, Cher, Dire Straits, Duane Allman, Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, the original Broadway cast album of *The Wiz*. His soundtrack to the Louis Malle film *Pretty Baby*, set in New Orleans ("I still listen to Kid Ory with a great deal of pleasure") was nominated for an Oscar and he had consultant credit on Francis Ford Coppola's film on Harlem's fabled Cotton Club.

He offered spoonfuls of *profiterolles au chocolat* around the table.

"Basically, I'm a bebopper. Bebop is an inescapable idiom. I'm proud of the bebop records Atlantic put out at the beginning, the MJQ and Tony Fruscella, for example. I love



honky-tonk, Dixieland and Western Swing. We had our little supper-club line with Mabel Mercer, Bobby Short and so on – not too many people remember that. I love anything from Column A.

"I was specialising in black popular music, with jazz on the side. I loved Willie Nelson for years. I met Willie at a party in Nashville when he was 42 and trying to get his career going again. Nobody wanted him. I said, 'You don't know how long I've been waiting to meet you.' We signed him and went into the studio two days later."

A few years ago, he produced an album with Linda Ronstadt backed by a contemporary jazz combo featuring Tommy Flanagan, Tal Farlow, Ira Sullivan and Al Cohn. Cohn wrote the arrangements: "When it was finished Linda didn't want it to come out for some reason. Later she had all that success (*What's New?*) with Nelson Riddle's arrangements of basically the same material. I'm happy she introduced good standards to all those kids, even though our date had to stay in the can. If I had the right, which I don't, I'd release it in a hot New York minute."

Bob Dylan had gone through the folk trip, the rock trip and the country trip and when he wanted to get Wexler's trademark polished r & b sound with keyboards, background vocals, horns and big textures he naturally came to him. It was five years ago, Wexler was tired of beating the bushes to look for the next Donny Hathaway. He preferred to go into the studio with an established name. Having gambled all his life on risky signings that looked evident later, he felt he'd earned instant compensation.

"Bob and I did his gospel album *Slow Train Coming* together. I had no idea he was on this born-again Christian trip until he started to evangelise me. I said, 'Bob, you're dealing with a 62-year-old confirmed Jewish atheist. I'm hopeless. Let's just make the album.'"

He hailed the *garçon*: "How about a digest?"

Mike Zwerin

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHARLIE GILLET, WHOSE BOOK *MAKING TRACKS* (W. H. ALLEN) IS AN INDISPENSABLE REFERENCE WORK ON THE ATLANTIC LABEL STORY, GREATLY DESERVING RE-PUBLICATION

# ON THE RECORD

## Jazz at the Phil

NORMAN GRANZ's famous Philharmonic concerts have persistently been seen by the music's grey eminences as a bastard child somehow divorced from the true mainstream of the "art-form".

Both the concerts themselves, and the records which resulted, have time and again been damned with faint praise: if something good is noticed, it is taken for granted that player X produced it in spite of, rather than because of, his low-life surroundings for the evening. This has always seemed to me an unduly harsh judgement, akin somewhat to the Eng. Lit. Establishment's inability to grant people such as Jack Kerouac and Raymond Chandler a position in their pantheon alongside Eliot, Pound and Woolf.

Basic complaints about these shows were the players' readiness to play to the crowds, the unashamed hysteria of some sessions – especially when it came to tenor sax players – and the wrestling-match reactions of the fans. Clearly, when you listen to these dates you know you're not sitting in Birdland's Dry Area. Rarely were the players themselves asked what they thought. Only in relatively recent years, have many of these musicians been interviewed and stated their own positive views of the whole concept which, after all, gave them great pay and conditions, put them on big stages in front of big audiences, and put them together with their musical peers every night.

Listening today to the music, the immediate reaction is just how fresh and exciting this music is. For years the vapid argument of entertainment versus art bedevilled jazz: here's a whole bunch of music that effortlessly combines both approaches. So, in today's market-place, who's going to complain? I guess many people unaware of the whole messy debate will, on listening to these releases, wonder what all the fuss was about. Most of it was about a certain infamous JATP date at Carnegie Hall in 1947 starring Illinois Jacquet and Flip Phillips; but that isn't included in these releases, and is another story so we'll leave it at that.

So much for ancient history: now for the music currently on release. Verve (UK) have released five LPs in a series of ten generated by the parent Verve (US) company. I have here given the complete list of ten and separated the local releases from the imports so as to avoid unnecessary confusion. The local releases are also available on tape. I shall deal with these five first.

Verve 1 *One O'Clock Jump 1953* is made up of the jam-session sequences from the original boxed set JATP Vol. 16 which had included small group sets from Oscar Peterson's Trio, Gene Krupa and Lester Young. This generously timed record (there's over 50 minutes of playing time) is wholly typical of the genre. There's plenty of excitement, plenty of first-class soloists and the recorded sound is excellent.

On the mammoth "Cool Blues" (surely a deliberate misnomer!) both Charlie Shavers and Willie Smith shine but the real killer is an absolutely electrifying Ben Webster. "The Challenges" is a vehicle designed to pit Shavers and Eldridge against each other and it works well as such. As an added bonus, the "One O'Clock Jump" which winds up the record (and also originally wound up the concert) includes a fluid couple of choruses from Lester Young. All through this set is the full-toned and exciting tenor work of Flip Phillips – a man of many parts as a player but, here, showing his ability to swing like crazy.

Verve 2 *The Trumpet Battle 1952* is excerpted from the 1952 concert which originally produced the boxed set JATP Vol. 15. There is some quite exceptional Benny Carter on the "Jam Session Blues" and, although he has publicly registered his disdain for the JATP approach, here his sometimes asinine attack gels into some stirring, rich-toned playing. Young also has a particularly fine spot, using a collection of quirky, imaginative phrases. The "Ballad Medley" finds both trumpeters playing to telling effect and also has Young on a ballad he seemingly never played without complete commitment, "I Can't Get Started".

Verve 3 - *The Coleman Hawkins Set* has some truly great



Hawkins' playing on it, both in the quartet format of Side A and in the Eldridge-partnered quintet of Side B. Hawkins isn't usually thought of as a JATP regular in the way that Jacquet, Young, or even Oscar Peterson was, but he was on many of the annual tours, including 1946, 1949, 1950 and 1957. Here we have his "sets" of 1949, 1950 and 1957. Outstanding among the older material is a sterling re-investigation of "Body and Soul", and a wonderfully poised "Yesterdays", while the later date (previously available only as the mono version of Hawkins/Eldridge at the Opera House) finds both men positively inspiring each other and creating great music.

Verve 4 *The Krupa Rich Drum Battle* is perhaps the most reissued JATP material, so there's not too much to add to what is already known. Both men's styles are hallmarks in jazz and deservedly so. Suffice to say that, in a number of varying formats here, they both find peak form.

Verve 5 *Bird & Pres Carnegie Hall 1949* is definitely a showcase for Parker and Young but also contains some rousing Flip Phillips and a Roy Eldridge bursting with energy and ideas. It also has a liberal dosing of something which was endemic to these shows, the strings of riffs evolved by the horns to back each soloist. On most JATP records it's often a pleasure to listen to these riffs alone, so strong and wonderfully apt are they in each context. But the main point of attention on this release is, rightly, the pairing of Young and Parker and while Bird is perhaps not as beguiling at times as on his 1946 JATP dates, his "Embraceable You" solo is fantastic. Also worthy of serious and repeated listening is his effort on "Lester Leaps In", while Young himself on this title has a lean and virile tone. Young's solo on "The Opener", incidentally, is a thing of great beauty, elusive, half-formed, seemingly, but full of brilliant ideas. In fact, there's no weak track on this record. For this we can thank the superb rhythm section of Hank Jones, Ray Brown and Buddy Rich as much as anyone. Their work here is supple, and intensely swinging at times, but is unfailingly sensitive to the needs of each individual soloist.

The US released titles are equally interesting. On 815 147-1 *The Ella Fitzgerald Set* we have, at last, a representation of someone who was a JATP perennial in the Fifties but who was barred by a recording contract with another company from appearing on the official releases of the time. However, Granz still recorded her sets and from these recordings this record results. It's typical Ella, from her best period and in front of an audience. She bristles with warmth and communication, she displays that wonderful accuracy of singing and her incredible purity of voice, and everyone has a ball. An extra juicy track here is the closing jam with the whole JATP troupe.

US Verve 815 151-1 *Noirgran Blues 1950* was originally part of a boxed set called *Norman Granz' Jazz Concert I*, and is here released for the first time under its proper JATP banner. It's a fine example of a jam session where all participants are at ease with each other, obviously enjoying themselves. The trumpeter that year was Sweets Edison. While he spends most of his time in a blatant attempt to get the crowd going (he succeeds), there's plenty of meaty playing from Harris, Phillips and Young. In a line-up smaller than the average JATP jam, it's interesting to note the role of Flip Phillips. This veteran of Woody Herman's greatest Herd fitted the bill for Granz both on ballads and on uptempo fliers but his solos are never vacuous, containing their own fine logic and crisply executed ideas. Hank Jones also gets a chance to shine on these sides.

*The Challenges 1954* (US Verve 815.154-1) comes from a boxed set originally released as JATP Vol. 17 which also featured sets by Buddy DeFranco, Oscar Peterson and Lionel Hampton. Again the jams have an all-star line-up, with Dizzy Gillespie returning after an eight-year gap away from the JATP stage. With him is the perennial Eldridge, while the saxes are Phillips and Webster.

For sheer robust excitement, the two uptempo tracks on this set would be hard to beat, even in JATP terms. Diz and Roy try desperately to cut each other and Roy, in particular, gives his all. Having Phillips and Webster together was always an intriguing experience, as evidenced by the famous "Funky Blues" jam session date with Parker and Hodges, given Flip's ability to mimic precisely Webster's style and tone. "The Ballad

Medley" is something else again, however. Among the five songs chosen by the lead horns, there's not a single dud performance, with Bill Harris particularly warm and persuasive on "Imagination", while Eldridge's "Man I Love" is a thrilling rendition.

*Blues in Chicago 1955* (US Verve 815.155-1) features a similar format to the 1954 sessions, adding only two short small-group numbers, "The Swing Set" and "The Modern Set". Somehow, Lester Young is in the modern set, with Gillespie, while the appreciably younger Illinois Jacquet is with the swing set. Slightly odd line-ups, perhaps, but it gives us our only example of Pres and Diz playing in a quintet format together and it's an interesting pairing. As for the rest, Jacquet is particularly convincing, having by this time come a long way from his days as a stage-stormer for Hampton and the JATP concerts of the early and mid-Forties. Here, he shows a wonderful tone, masterly rhythm and an abundance of ideas, as well as his usual capacity to excite the listener like no-one else.

Last on the list – and possibly of greatest interest to JATP collectors and the completists of this world – is *The Rarest Concerts* (US Verve 815.149-1). One side of this record is given over to a 22-minute jam from 1953 (originally a bonus ten-inch LP with JATP Set Vol. 16) and is fully up to the rip-roaring standard of blowing to be found from all participants on UK Verve 1. Standouts, perhaps, are Webster's magnificently built solo (his first year as a JATP regular), Harris's persuasive, swinging trombone spot and Phillip's beautifully paced effort. This easy-swinging, medium-tempo blues also vividly underlines the consistently marvellous quality of the JATP rhythm section. By the Fifties, this usually included the Peterson trio (featuring, in Ray Brown, one of jazz's greatest walkers) plus a stand out drummer such as Krupa, Rich or Bellson. Earlier participants from these ranks had included Nat Cole, Les Paul, Ken Kersey, Hank Jones, Mel Powell, Arnold Ross, Lee Young, Jo Jones, Shadow Wilson and J.C. Heard, among others, at various times. A JATP rhythm section was never less than awake to what was happening with the soloist, was unfailingly sympathetic to him and, at times, generated as much excitement as the soloist himself.

Side Two of this record consists of two extra tracks from the fantastic 1946 concert which saw Hawkins, Young and Parker on the same stage and in a band which included Buck Clayton and Willie Smith for good measure. Both tracks are worthy additions, although Parker is absent from them, for each soloist shines, and Buck is in top form. "I Can't Get Started" is, perhaps, the more valuable of the two; although all the soloists play exceptionally, Young's opening solo is a fantastic, mesmerizing piece of beauty.

A word about the first-rate packaging. The LP designs are attractive and uniform, the recording details complete and accessible, and the liner-notes to each record well researched. All this is exemplary and a rare pleasure these days. The only gripe I have is the common one of a total dearth of information on the local cassette equivalents for Verves 1-5 (there are no cassettes for the US imports). No personnel or dates, just the names of the songs. Still, the transfer quality is excellent and, as all Granz's concerts were well recorded, that means good sound throughout. Such a pity about the tapes: it could have so easily been put right, even if just the personnel and dates had been listed.

Keith Shadwick

#### JATP REISSUES

Verve 1 (VRVC 1) *One O'Clock Jump 1953* Recorded September 1953

Verve 2 (VRVC 2) *The Trumpet Battle 1952* Recorded October 1952

Verve 3 (VRVC 3) *The Coleman Hawkins Set* Recorded 1949, 1950 & 1957

Verve 4 (VRVC 4) *Gene Krupa Budda Rich – The Drum Battle* Recorded October 1952

Verve 5 (VRVC 5) *Bird and Pres Carnegie Hall 1949* Recorded September 1949

Verve 815.147-1 *The Ella Fitzgerald Set* Recorded 1949, 1953 & 1954

Verve 815.151-1 *Noirgran Blues 1950* Recorded September 1950

Verve 815.154-1 *The Challenges 1954* Recorded September 1954

Verve 815.155-1 *Blues in Chicago 1955* Recorded October 1955

Verve 815.149-1 *The Rarest Concerts* Recorded 1946 & 1953





**ROUND ABOUT  
MONK**



A HISTORY of American improvised piano is studded with the talents of innovators and consolidators. But I know of no pianist as personal as Thelonious Monk - like Ben Webster and Billie Holiday, there is never any doubt who is at the keyboard. It may be a delayed attack, a cluster that pounces like a spiralling tornado or an angular jagged snippet that asserts itself under many guises.

Pianists and musicians might gain a great deal by studying and considering Monk's melodic imagination when "comping" behind the soloist, his use of the melody of a composition as the "cantus firmus" instead of the ubiquitous pattern outlining of chord changes and, above all, his magnificent use of space. These are a few of the important elements of Thelonious Monk's piano style.

Monk's solos are superb examples of what I call "liquid composition". Whitney Balliet says this is another way "His (Monk's) improvisations were molten Monk compositions and his compositions were frozen Monk improvisations." In Monk's superb solo on "Bag's Groove", to be discussed later, he does more than suggest his tune "Misterioso". In the sixth chorus he brilliantly develops an idea as a composer might have done, drawing on material from his fifth chorus. Monk also alters his compositions structurally. One good example can be observed by comparing the 1951 Blue Note record version with the early Sixties' Columbia version of his masterpiece "Criss Cross".

In the 1951 Blue Note "Criss Cross", Monk presents his theme completely. But with the early Sixties' Columbia version, Monk omits the last two bars of the bridge, thus creating a drastic transformation of the theme structurally.

I'd like to discuss Monk's "comping", pre-determined compositions, "recompositions", rhythm, harmonic ingenuity, unprepared or "liquid compositions", and also give examples of his roots in Harlem Stride piano and of his pianistic technique.

Let us start with technique. How often have you heard a musician say: "Monk writes 'good tunes' but he can't play the piano?" Listen to the third and fourth bar of Monk's solo on "Eronel" (Trio Records TLP 5022). Here Monk seems to be playing a trill with one part of his right hand while the other part of his right hand plays the melody. Simultaneously, Monk plays chord tones in the extreme low register of the piano. This feat of

**The eminent American pianist-composer RAN BLAKE takes a musician's look at Monk's "liquid compositions".**



Two excerpts from "Eronel" © 1962 Bocu Music

pianism certainly merits the term "virtuosity", as does much of Monk's playing (see example: "Eronel").

For people who might doubt that Monk has roots, "Thelonious" (Blue Note BN 1A-579 H2) will be a cheerful surprise. The first half of his second chorus demonstrates Monk's appreciation and creative use of the Harlem Stride tradition (see example: "Thelonious").

The gorgeous notes he assigns the horns are very powerful because of the chromatic augmented whole tone voicings.

Let us return to Monk as a composer. "Hornin' In", "Brilliant Corners", "Pannonica", "Criss Cross", and "Crepuscle

With Nellie" all show different facets of Monk's thinking.

"Hornin' In" clearly demonstrates how Monk organises pitch material. This is probably Monk's most rarely played composition and one I believe he never re-recorded. In the first seven bars, Monk bases his melody on the two whole tone scales which have different pitch material (for example, C to C and Db to Db). Although an occasional note of the melody and counter line might lie outside the scale, Monk eschews the oblique melodic curves and rhythmic surprise that characterise a large body of his other works (see example: "Hornin' In").

The first two half bars make use of the



Part of Monk's solo on "Thelonious" © 1978 Bocu Music



Ensemble orchestration of the A section of "Hornin' In". © 1978 Bocu Music

# the music





Monk backstage at New York's Village Vanguard with Baroness Nica de Koenigswarter, 1971

F whole tone scale. During the third bar, his melody shifts to the E whole tone scale.

In this measure he reiterates F from the former scale before changing Eb to E#. In the fourth measure, the original scale is used and E# becomes the foreign note.

For the ears of the musicians who were cherishing the swift melodies of Bird and blues tonality of Mahalia Jackson in the early Fifties, this was entirely new, even shocking. Where were the II V I progressions? Where were the expected cadences or smaller gravitational satellites or subsidiary satellites which serve as

gravitational home base reassuring the listener?

Many new elements were created and brought into the European concert music tradition by Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Igor Stravinsky, and others; yet Afro-American music generally, with certain notable exceptions (including Duke Ellington, Lennie Tristano, Billy Strayhorn, Richard Twardzik and George Russell), had left much of the new terrain unexplored even during the bebop era.

In "Hornin' In", Monk was able to channel his predilection for whole tone

scales and the augmented chords into a catchy, whistleable melody.

In the mid-Fifties, Monk severed his association with Blue Note records and later, Prestige. Under the sympathetic support of Orin Keepnews of Riverside, he composed three of his finest compositions: "Brilliant Corners", "Pannonica" and "Crepuscle With Nellie", as well as catchy tunes such as "Jackie King" and "Worry Now Later". Space and time do not permit a complete description of "Brilliant Corners" and "Pannonica", both of which have been reissued on *Brilliance* (Milestone M 47023). "Pannonica" is dedicated to the legendary Baroness Pannonica Koenigswarter.

"Pannonica", which incidentally marks Monk's debut on celeste, is a composition which haunts, its granite beauty often has a devastating impact on listeners, even those not fully convinced by Monk.

"Brilliant Corners" has a melody which stalks around a circular path. Shifts in tempo and Sonny Rollins' fine solo add to Monk's uncompromising mood and obsession imbued within this melody.

Besides Baroness Koenigswarter, Monk's wife Nellie was a great source of strength to her husband. "Crepuscle With Nellie", written while she was recuperating from an illness, may be Monk's most harmonically rich composition (see example "Crepuscle With Nellie").

Monk has composed a vast library of music, from the bewitching "Introspection", jagged "Evidence" (the Atlantic version has a more clearly stated melody than the original Blue Note), the overwhelming "Skippy", "Work" and, of course, his blues, "Misterioso". It is difficult to single out one composition over the others but most scholars and many fans agree that "Criss Cross" is among Monk's best.

In "Criss Cross" I particularly like the second note which gives a lydian quality to the first four bars, but the pitch and chords are not what is important. What is striking here is the *rhythm of the melody*, its shifts, accents and alteration of meter (see example "Criss Cross").

"Criss Cross" is also notable for inspiring Gunther Schuller's extraordinary *Variants On a Theme of Thelonious Monk* (Atlantic 1365). One might be tempted to call this an extended "recomposition".

Monk "recomposed" practically every standard tune he played. In "recomposition", a high degree of personality of the artist permeates the subject matter without destroying or obliterating the original. The "recomposer" often explores new horizons that are not merely embellishment but ones that can alter the basic structure of the original composition.

In film, Luis Bunuel, Carlos Saura and even Alfred Hitchcock are considered *auteurs*. They are more than innovators. Their films possess identifiable style—a special recognisable and often off beat vintage.



"Crepuscle With Nellie". © 1978 Bocu Music



The lead line of "Criss Cross". © 1962 Bocu Music



Handwritten musical score for Monk's solo on "The Man I Love". The score is written on five systems of grand staves (treble and bass clef). Above the first system, the tempo is marked "♩ = 200". Chord symbols are written above the staff: E9maj7, E9m7, Gm7b5, C7, Fm7b5, and Bb7. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like "LH" and "RH".

Monk's solo on "The Man I Love" 1924 New World Music Corp

Handwritten musical score for Monk's solo on Milt Jackson's "Bag's Groove". The score is written on ten systems of grand staves. It features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with some measures marked with "3" or "6". The notation is dense and includes many slurs and ties, indicating a highly technical and improvisational performance.

Monk's solo on Milt Jackson's "Bag's Groove" (1958 Wemar Music)

Monk, too, possesses a unique and readily identifiable style. For instance, "Carolina Moon" (Blue Note BN-LA-579-H2), "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" (Prestige PR 24006) and, particularly, "I Should Care" (Milestone M 47004 *Pure Monk*) are an extension of Monk's personality and special ears — his total essence. Although we still recognise the old tunes, they are now unmistakably Monk's property.

The first two of these standards show preparation. "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes" is even more memorable and certainly one of the most successful selections he recorded for Prestige. Here the ambiances of the original Jerome Kern song and the twilight world of a late Monk evening momentarily collide and merge as one. His writing for horns outrageously hints at the original Kern harmonies peppered by freshly ground whole tones. His contradictions mesh perfectly with his more orthodox choices.

But, "I Should Care" is perhaps the quintessential example of Monk's "re-composing". Not only does this example show how Monk handles another person's material, it shows Monk as an unaccompanied piano soloist (see example, "I Should Care").

With regard to Monk's extraordinary "comping", a good example is found during the second and last chorus of "Misterioso" (Blue Note BN LA 579-H2). While Milt Jackson is respectively soloing and repeating the melody, Monk skilfully supports the melody by a single note so perfectly pitched and rhythmically placed that everything else going on seems routine and embellishment.

The two concluding examples were recorded for Prestige after Monk had left Blue Note that is, as a leader — and before he joined Riverside in the mid-Fifties. His playing on "The Man I Love" is a gem. I have chosen these passages because they are remarkable examples of Monk's rhythmic imagination and, in fact, constitute one of Monk's most rhythmically daring ventures (see example "The Man I Love").

"Bag's Groove" is a superb nine chorus blues solo by Monk (see Jim Aikin's transcription).

There is much to learn and emulate from Monk. Among the greatest lessons he has to teach us are the ways in which he uses space — both intervallic space and temporal space. In two minutes or less, he can paraphrase a melody, lovingly or sarcastically altering the landscape of the architecture by adding or subtracting a note or two, emphasising an accent here, allowing silences a chance to breathe. Such minute transformations are close to the essence of Monk's uniqueness.

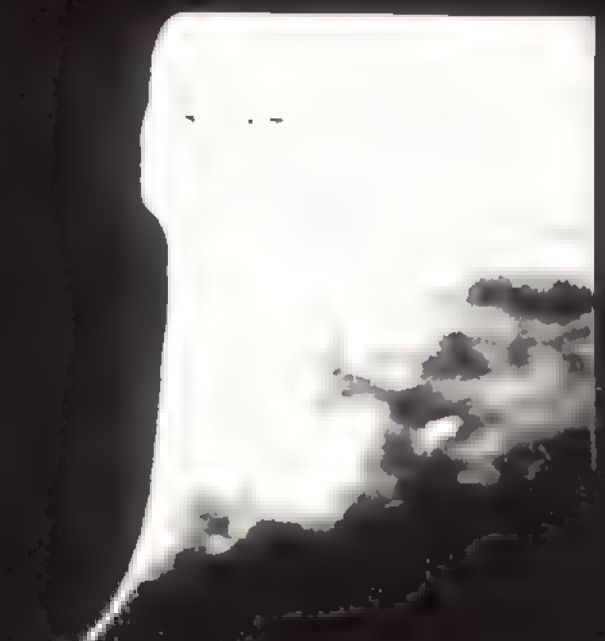
On a broader scale, we can study how Monk developed the ingredients that were fresh and vital to him and how he assimilated and moulded them into a new perspective, both in his improvisations and in his compositions. He created his own universe. There is only one Monk.



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# reflections

IN ONE sense, the conventional image of Thelonious Monk has hardly changed since the day that Allen Ginsberg's words were written (8 June, 1965, according to its author). In another, the image has been thoroughly overhauled, transformed from "heavy weirdo" to "far-reaching influence".

Yet, when it comes to describing just how and why Monk is influential, discussion often focusses still on the idiosyncratic nature of his own style and the fact that it is much admired is assumed to prove its influence on others. Both the style and the influence are worth discussing, but what clouds the issue is Monk's status as a composer.

After all, Coltrane wrote much of his own material, as did Parker, but no one would claim that their tunes were the most important part of what they achieved. In the early days, however, that was precisely what was said of Monk, although this was more often than not the viewpoint of people who couldn't come to terms with his actual playing. On the other hand, there is the more serious school of thought which specifically excludes people like Trane and Bird from the role of "jazz composer", reserving the term for a rarified and extremely select group of master musicians.

Monk's candidacy for membership of this vernacular Valhalla is best stated by Gunther Schuller: "The [individual] instrumental parts of many of his compositions of the late 40s seemed to be part and parcel of the original inspiration; they were truly independent yet integrated parts of the composition, and well suited to the character of the instruments chosen". Whether or not this describes Monk's working methods at the time, I very much doubt, for it appears dangerously close to the European conception of the composer's role. And it is clearly a different definition from the jazz ideal of "collective composition" as attempted (sometimes) by the early Ellington band, the mid-period Mingus groups and the later Gil Evans ensemble.

Both of these approaches are, in any case worlds away from Monk's monolithic lines like "Straight No Chaser" and "In Walked Bud". These, and other more complex single-note lines, are the work of a writer who couldn't care less about the character of the instruments at hand and he could be very dismissive if other people's versions of his songs were not played exactly as he wrote them (which often happens with "Rhythm-a-ning" and especially "Well You Needn't"). When dealing with his own sidemen's difficulties in executing the dots put before them, he was fond of saying, "You've got a union card, haven't you?"

**... Be kind to the Monk in the 5 Spot who plays  
lone chord-bangs on his vast piano  
lost in space on a bench and hearing himself  
in the nightclub universe –  
(ALLEN GINSBERG, WHO BE KIND TO)**

So play the music!" a jibe earlier attributed to arranger Fletcher Henderson.

Indeed, the reason for the sidemen's occasional difficulties stems from the fact that Monk's tunes all seem to have been conceived in terms of the piano, at least initially. This applies just as much to ballads like "Monk's Mood" or "Round Midnight" (whose early quintet recording is easily the least effective version) as it does to the unhornlike "Off Minor" and "Criss Cross" or to obvious finger-busters such as "Four in One". I would guess, for instance, that the issued recordings of the splendid "Skippy" (based, incidentally, on Monk's reharmonisation of "Tea for Two") open with the theme on piano alone because the frontline, starting in cold at the beginning of the performance, couldn't achieve the satisfactory rendition they manage at the end. It's rather like listening to the similarly startling "Trinkle Tinkle" first in the 1952 piano version and then in the version with Coltrane playing the theme.

Both tunes are a trial of strength for the horns and it's no accident that Monk's one contribution to the repertoire of jazz ensemble textures, frequently copied by Keith Jarrett's quartets, is the sound of a tune outlined by saxophone and piano in unison – it was Monk's method of ensuring accuracy and authenticity. Because, as soon as Miles and then Art Blakey started using the occasional Monk tune in the Fifties (I'm not implying any superiority, merely relative popularity), it was obvious that some of them would become standard "blowing vehicles", part of the required material for jam sessions. But Monk himself, royalties aside, was not interested in such accolades and preferred to have his songs "interpreted" by sympathetic, Monk-trained soloists.

In this connection, it's especially important that Monk's roots lay in pre-bop which, pianistically, means the stride players plus Teddy Wilson and a lot of Count Basie. But the roots were not only melodic and, of course, rhythmic (cf Ted Curson's comment in *The Wire* 8) but also in questions of interpretation. Improvisation, for him, was ideally not just a case of using the given chord-sequence to assemble an appropriate series of otherwise unrelated phrases – it was a matter of taking your point of departure

from the melody. Decoration or embellishment of a melodic line, which was the popular approach in the Twenties and Thirties, is well illustrated by a comparison of two quartet recordings of "Ruby My Dear", one featuring Coltrane and one with Monk's first mentor Coleman Hawkins. But during the bop era when most of his own contemporaries were at their most influential, Monk was out of luck – this was the period when playing on the changes was "it" and staying close to the melody (unless you were working for dancers or recording with strings) was castigated as the easy way out.

It was only in the mid Fifties, when bop began gradually turning into something else, that Monk got to record with his most adept interpreters, namely Trane and especially Sonny Rollins. Both of them in different ways learned from one of Monk's tactics for keeping the melody to the fore, by extracting key phrases and developing an improvisation around them. The excellent Johnny Griffin, by contrast was more of a throw-back to the idea of decorating a basic outline, but Steve Lacy (who made albums of Monk tunes both before and after his brief, unrecorded stint with the pianist's group) preferred motivic development, and like Rollins and Trane, used it in his later work. As to Monk's subsequent saxophonist Charlie Rouse, it might be better to maintain a discreet silence, although the dreadful clockwork rhythm sections Monk hired during the Sixties – so different from his studio collaborations with Blakey and Max Roach – may indicate a deliberate preference similar to that expressed by Lennie Tristano.

Given the unchanging nature of his material, and the demersory simplicity of his few later compositions such as "Bright Mississippi" and "Osaka I", you might be tempted to say that Monk's retirement began long before he withdrew from public performance in the Seventies – except that his own improvisations were frequently inspired, even in the most unpromising circumstances. The last time Monk appeared in a demanding situation (either promising or unpromising, according to your point of view) was the first Giants of Jazz tour in 1971 with Gillespie, Blakey et al, and yet Monk's contribution was no more and no less stimulating than in many other



"live" performances where the participants didn't even seem to be listening. But then, all the indications are that Monk was always extremely independent and self-sufficient and, doubtless, he found "accompanists" just as easy to ignore as he did potential interviewers.

So it's only to be expected that, ultimately, Monk was his own best interpreter. Extraordinary challenges such as "Friday the 13th", with its two bar chord sequence far more restricting than even "Giant Steps", more or less defeat all comers but, when Monk himself is soloing, they sound perfectly natural and easy. The similar but longer descending sequence of "Thelma" is combined with a basically one note melody, an idea which recurs in "Think of One" and hardly likely to appeal to the majority of improvisers. Other fast-moving (or "impossible") changes like those of "Humph" derive from Art Tatum's lightning superimpositions of the key cycle and, in addition, feature constant flattened fifths in the melody-line, whereas "Bemsha Swing" is the apotheosis of flat 5 substitutions in the bass. The beautiful and cunning way these daunting sequences are put together on paper is only equalled by the logic of Monk's improvisations on them.

At the height of the bebop era, therefore the emphasis on virtuosity meant that Monk was viewed as more of a theoretician than a performer and his original pieces as intricate puzzles comparable, perhaps, with the drawings of Escher. Certainly Monk had a harmonic influence on the beboppers, but it's remarkable how his pungent voicings, of the kind that can now seem overripe in the hands of Ladd Dameron, often create the illusion of a five- or six note chord with only four- or even three- notes, the resounding overtones doing the work of the more obvious notes which anyone else would leave in. While people were still getting used to him, however, this could easily have been taken for incompetence and, adding to this impression, there are (for whatever reason) three instances in a single 1948 record date of Monk getting temporarily lost, adding extra beats in "Misterioso" and the last chorus of "Evidence" and forgetting the agreed routine in "Epistrophy".

Despite, or maybe because of, his style being so hermetic (and eremitic, to quote his own title "Portrait of an Hermit") there is also a fondness for self-quotation which tends to reinforce the idea that his written tunes derive from his piano work, rather than the other way round. Fairly obvious examples from the early recordings include the appearance of the opening phrase from "I Mean You" during the solos on both "Off Minor" and "Who Knows", the alternate take of which also refers to the release of "Well You Needn't", and a quotation from "Misterioso" ends Monk's solo on "Straight No Chaser". In fact, all the pet phrases, whole-tone runs and seemingly tortuous shapes were (like a couple of the

best-known original tunes) already created by the start of the Forties. And we are fortunate indeed that the Minton's sessions, where piano past its best is usually obscured by background noise, contain at least one set recorded before the place filled up: on "Rhythm Riff" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It", a standard he was still playing in 1971, Monk is clearly heard exploring the "Tatum Changes" and building the walls of his own private world.

In fact, the vindication of Monk's piano style, as a joy in itself rather than a mere influence, can also be found in its application to otherwise harmless standard songs such as "April in Paris" or "I Surrender Dear". Whether or not incorporating an explicit stride left hand, the pre-bop rhythms sound untitled and unforced and, especially on solo performances, Monk achieves a rare combination

of quirky humour and meditative intimacy. Thinking one more time of his influence, it could be that the great appeal of unaccompanied playing, whatever the instrument, received its initial impetus more from Monk than from anyone else.

**Brian Priestley**

#### CURRENTLY AVAILABLE:

"Rhythm-a-ning" (w/Johnny Griffin) - Riverside OJC 103.

"Trinkle Tinkle"/"Bemsha Swing" - Prestige OJC 010.

(W/Coltrane) "Trinkle Tinkle"/"Ruby My Dear" - Jazzland OJC 039.

(W/Hawkins) "Ruby My Dear" - Riverside OJC 084.

*Giants of Jazz* - George Wein GW 3004.

"Friday the 13th"/"Think of One" (w/Rollins) - Prestige OJC 016.

"Portrait of an Hermit" - Reactivation JR 162.

"Rhythm Riff"/"Nice Work . . ." - Xanadu 112.

"Nice Work . . ." (1971) - Black Lion BLM 51501.

"I Surrender Dear" - Riverside OJC 026.

The original recordings of all other titles mentioned are in the boxed set Mosaic MR4-101.





# shades of monk



## THELONIOUS MONK

1961 European Tour Vol 1 (Ingo 5)

Recorded: Berne, Switzerland – 10 May, 1961.

*Side One:* "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You"; "Jackie-ing".

*Side Two:* "Crepuscle With Nellie"; "Round About Midnight"; "Blue Monk".

Charlie Rouse (ts); Monk (p); John Ore (b); Frankie Dunlop (d).

1961 European Tour Vol 2 (Ingo 8)

Recorded: Berne, Switzerland – 10 May, 1961.

*Side One:* "Sweet Georgia Brown"; "Rhythm-a-ning".

Recorded: Teatro Lirico, Milan – 21 April, 1961.

*Side Two:* "Epistrophy"; "Well, You Needn't"; "Blue Monk".

Same personnel.

Live at the It Club (CBS 88584 – 2 LPs)

Recorded: It Club, Los Angeles – 31 October, 1954.

*Side One:* "Blue Monk"; "Well, You Needn't"; "Round About Midnight".

*Side Two:* "Rhythm-a-ning"; "Blues Five Spot"; "Bemsha Swing".

*Side Three:* "Straight, No Chaser"; "Nutty"; "Evidence".

*Side Four:* "Mysterioso"; "Gallop's Gallop"; "Ba-lue Bolivar Ba-Lues-are".

Larry Gales (b); Ben Riley (d) replace Ore, Dunlop.

## ARTHUR BLYTHE

Light Blue (CBS 25397)

Recorded: New York City – 1983?

*Side One:* "We See"; "Light Blue"; "Off-Minor".

*Side Two:* "Epistrophy"; "Coming on the Hudson"; "Nutty".

Blythe (as); Abdul Wadud (cello); Kelvyn Bell (g); Bob Stewart (tuba); Bobby Battle (d).







# BORBETOMAGUS

THEIR records arrived in the UK in advance of the group themselves. Released independently in the States on their own label Agaric, Borbetomagus's albums impressed immediately with their physical intensity and sweeping energy. A later Leo Records release confirmed these impressions. Some two years or so later the group themselves arrived.

The relative values – both implicit and explicit – of recordings and live concerts constitute an old debate. One which cannot be resolved. Different musics and different musicians place different emphasis on the two media. In doing so they strike an individual balance between them, one which effects the significance of either concert or record in assessing a musician or group's musical activity.

Nevertheless, the record is a received object. Arriving in advance of the group it creates precedents and a framework of expectations against which a live performance will be judged. With Borbetomagus those expectations were high (the recordings suggested extraordinarily volatile and powerful performers) and it says much for the group that when they performed at the recent Actual 84 before a depressingly small audience they fulfilled expectations.

The two saxophonists locked together musically (and intermittently, physically) creating a dense mesh of sound which swooped and hovered in the hall. Underpinning the saxophones or lacerating their curtain of noise, Donald Miller's guitar could be harsh, jagged, wailing or opaque. They played loud, demonstrated an affinity for the resonant frequency of the theatre itself but never sacrificed detail to mere onslaught.

As their recordings had suggested, their performance was raw and intense, provocative but satisfying. This was not, however, the unanimous decision of the whole audience. Many quit the hall and one musician amongst those leaving was upset enough to call out during a brief break that he hoped "Daddy doesn't cut off their allowance".

Such reactions are not uncommon. As saxophonist Don Dietrich was to comment later: "There's usually very little mid-ground in terms of response to our music. People either like it or they dismiss it immediately."

Borbetomagus have been engaging audiences for six years. They met when Miller was doing a radio programme from Columbia University. He was broadcasting mostly experimental and improvised music.

"I was flipping the dials one day and I caught the station," Dietrich explained and, as a result, he and fellow-saxophonist Jim Sauter made contact with Miller and eventually the three of them got together to play.

"That was in early '78", Dietrich continued, "and we immediately recognised an affinity between us. And, at least, the potential for greater things."

In fact, that meeting came at a most opportune moment. Miller was at the end of his patience with a group in which he was involved where there existed a powerful lobby to redirect the group from experimental music to rock & roll. Similarly, although they mostly organised the groups in which they performed, Sauter and Dietrich were becoming frustrated at the inability of those groups to create the sort of music they envisaged.

"We realised there was something lacking in the direction we were taking," stated Dietrich, "what Donald presented was

something more challenging, more exciting."

"It was something that we could hear," Sauter added, "but which wasn't really happening with the people we were playing with."

The music they were interested in creating was characterised as much by certain qualities it was to embrace as it was by the language it would employ or the musical pigeon-hole it would eventually occupy. As Borbetomagus they worked together to incorporate those qualities. Dietrich explained further:

"I think the issue revolves about a certain musical vitality. We aim to reach a point where that vitality is infused into the music – whether it's 'good' music or not – where there's a certain life in what we've put into the air. We also wanted to explore something more psychedelic and that's a part of what we're still exploring with Borbetomagus. That's part of our upbringing which we've chosen never to let go of – the Sixties renaissance of creativity and daring to go one step further."

Dietrich cited examples such as Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* album, he also went on to bracket Ayler's *Prophecy* and Coltrane's *Ascension* under the psychedelic banner. The group reject, however, the naivety and gross self-indulgence which also proliferated in the Sixties.

"In any period you're going to find a handful of mature artists and flocks and flocks of immature artists who follow in their footsteps," was Miller's retort to the currently fashionable caricature of the Sixties which suggests that those qualities were the only ones to prosper during those years.

"We also felt very strongly about the group sound. It's just collective improvisation but it always seems to work towards a specific sound which we call Borbetomagus. Instead of following any particular style or trend we just wanted to develop this sound which we felt was something very unique and special," said Sauter.

All these concerns, curiously enough, seem to pitch Borbetomagus closer to European precedents than to those of their native America. Their vocabulary, for example, immediately recalls the early work of AMM while Evan Parker and Peter Brotzmann are also brought to mind. Such comparisons seem to



KEITH BYRNE

## :PLAYING OFF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM



be borne out by their recordings, where they are joined by musicians such as Hugh Davies and Peter Kowald. The group was also keen to appear with AMM at the London Musicians Collective during their stay in London to play the Actual Festival.

Surprisingly, in an age in which attempts to sweep influences under the carpet are the norm rather than the exception, Borbetomagus concur. They even suggest a few more names: Music Improvisation Company, Mauricio Kagel, New Phonic Art, Iannis Xenakis . . . adding "the immediate influences in our music are some of the really extraordinary music which has come out of Europe."

When asked if they can identify why this should be the case, the group refer to the differing uses of rhythm "A lot of the music which has come out of New York and the States since the Sixties has involved some tremendous rhythms but they were very definite drum rhythms (for example, Sunny Murray, Milford Graves and Andrew Cyrille). But we don't have that sort of direct connection to an explicit rhythm derived from skins and cymbals. We work with a more internal rhythm. Using that internal rhythm keeps our music very rhythmic; it's as if there was a drummer there without explicitly stating the rhythms."

Nevertheless, Borbetomagus are not mere copyists slavishly aping their influences. They may share some common vocabulary and a certain rhythmic approach but they are anxious to shape a music which is uniquely Borbetomagus.

Miller argues, "In improvised music one sees an awful lot of repetition of the ideas of a handful of musicians (and sometimes even a drastic decapitation of language by artists from the first generation in the early Sixties). We really dreaded the idea of fitting into that, it just wasn't interesting for any of us. We wanted our own techniques and our own music."

Thus, they spent the first two years of the six year period they have functioned as a group working intensively together. They stopped rehearsing, as such, after their first eighteen months together. "But," Dietrich added, "we practise diligently although we practise separately. And what discoveries we make as individuals we bring to the group Borbetomagus. It is those individual changes and discoveries which add to the certain growth of the group."

Not surprisingly, over that six year period, Borbetomagus have developed certain corporate techniques of their own. Dietrich and Sauter, for example, lock the bells of their saxophones together in order that the two air columns within the instrument interfere with each other, neither is solely responsible for the resultant sound although both contribute to it. Sauter uses a length of hose pipe between his saxophone mouthpiece and the body of the instrument which effectively drops its pitch and distinctively alters its tone.

Miller frequently lays his guitar flat on its back employing implements such as nail-files on the strings in a manner reminiscent of Keith Rowe and, latterly, Fred Frith. Unlike them, he lays the guitar across his knees, often using leg movements to trigger the impedimenta cluttering the strings.

What is, perhaps, less usual is the group vocabulary which has evolved to cover such techniques. The mated saxophones are referred to as "bells", "hose" covers to the extension of Sauter's instrument and "spittoon" describes a technique whereby a reservoir of liquid is held in the mouth and the saxophone mouthpiece is submerged in it as the instrument is blown. The evolution of such a language indicates the close-knit nature of a group which has remained the almost exclusive focus of these three musicians' activity for an extended period of time.

Such techniques — and the music they create with them — have not brought Borbetomagus immediate acclaim in the States any more than it has in Europe. In fact, if anything, the opposite has been the case with the American media and promoters bordering on negligent in their attitude towards the group.

"We've always joked that we're probably New York City's best kept secret," Sauter comments wryly. "In five years of public performance in New York we've repeatedly kept publications and critics informed about our activity, we've

repeatedly invited them to our concerts, yet we've received virtually no acknowledgement of our existence. Ironically, I think that our opportunity to come to Europe for Actual and other dates has finally aroused a bit of interest in us in New York."

In view of the group's affinity for European music and the dearth of acknowledgement of their work in the States, it seems natural — if not inevitable — that Borbetomagus should eventually arrive in Europe. When they arrived, the experience of the three-week tour gave them a fresh perspective on their work together.

"For the first time since we've been together as a group we're playing and travelling almost non-stop and during these three weeks we've played more concerts than we usually do in a year."

The first concert of the tour was in Berlin where word-of-mouth alone brought them an audience of over one hundred; in Leipzig they played on a festival programme before 1,700 people. This period of intense activity in these sometimes unusual circumstances has had musical ramifications, putting fresh pressures on the group.

"Every time we play we have to satisfy ourselves. We're not ready to just go out and go through the motions or do the same act at each concert. I think it's surprised us just how varied each concert has been," Dietrich said.

"As it turned out, we really challenged ourselves by having so many concerts," Sauter added. "The live performance is a situation where certain things emerge which would just never happen in a garage rehearsal space or in our individual practising. That, for us, is one of the thrills of performing publicly: it really pushes us into stretching ourselves further. I think we did that on this tour."

The performances at Actual and the LMC marked the end of the tour and the group returned to the States. However, they recorded all the concerts on the tour and remain optimistic that some of the concerts may eventually emerge on record. Cadence Records have expressed an interest in hearing the tapes with a view to a possible release and there's always Agaric Records . . .

Borbetomagus also hope that Leo Records will see their way clear to releasing the second half of the "Industrial Strength" set.

Back in New York, an expanded line-up which also features a drummer, Marc Adler, and electric bass player Adam Nodelman alongside a belly-dancer answering to the name of Zhamela played a concert just prior to Borbetomagus's departure for Europe and everybody involved is enthusiastic that the project should continue.

Meanwhile, it seems unlikely that we shall have another opportunity to witness Borbetomagus live in Europe in the near future. Which seems a pity in view of the strong impression they created at the Bloomsbury Theatre.

They huddled together at the epicentre of an aural tornado, sculpting from the raw sound material a violent, abrasive set that was at once rivetting and challenging; sucking the listener towards the heart of the activity.

It is easy to believe Sauter's comment: "The music we enjoy hearing is the music that we make together — it's the music we'd love to hear but we've never heard anyone else doing it."

And Miller's analogy with painter Francis Bacon's description of his approach: "He describes working 'strictly off his nervous system' — and that's how I work. It involves a very physical process."

Until they return, we shall have to satisfy ourselves with their recordings. These may create an imbalanced picture but they indicate the combustible nature of Borbetomagus.

**Kenneth Ansell**

#### **BORBETOMAGUS' DISCOGRAPHY**

- Borbetomagus* (Agaric 1980)
- with Brian Dougherty (live electronics)
- Work On What Has Been Spotted* (Agaric 1981)
- with Hugh Davies (live electronics)
- Borbetomagus* (Agaric 1982)
- with Brian Dougherty (live electronics) — one track only
- Industrial Strength* (Leo LR113)
- with Peter Kowald (bass), Tristan Honsinger (cello, voice), Toshinori Kondo (trumpet, mutes, voice), Milo Fine (piano, clarinet)
- Barbed Wire Maggots* (Agaric 1983)



# HUGH MASEKELA

**"By the time I was six I was very musical. I sang the songs of the streets, went to church with my grandmother (who also ran a shebeen), and had started to play the piano. I was already searching musically, and was soon to start searching for a way out of South Africa. . ." – MASEKELA**

HUGH MASEKELA – born on April 4, 1939, in Witbank, a coalmining town 100 miles east of Johannesburg – left his native South Africa in 1960 and has never returned. Since, he has lived in such diverse places as the UK, USA, Guinea, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Botswana. He has said he won't go back to his birthplace until the system changes and, right from very young, he'd known that survival meant *getting out of SA*.

"My parents were the second urban generation on a totally large scale so we were still experiencing the traumas of adapting to urban after rural life, having been brought to the city as a cheap labour force and put in encampments townships.

I grew up watching the average black township person who went to the shebeens (a place where illicit liquor was sold), how they were after their lands had been taken away, their traditions ruined, their relegation to below the status of second-class citizens, and the constant repression and harassment. I saw how it was eating everybody up; most people couldn't cope with it.

"By the time I was fourteen, the buses had come to take us to be issued with passes, stand in rows and get numbered. The only difference with the way we were getting treated and the way the Jews in Nazi Europe had been treated ten years before was that we weren't getting exterminated. But we were being forcibly moved out of our houses as part of the enforcement of

The Morality Act, sex was prohibited across the races, families which had been living together were 'reclassified'. Banda education was specifically apartheid schooling – inferior education for blacks.

"I grew up realising music was my only chance; by the time I was fifteen I was making music and by twenty-one I was out of the country."

Miners arrived at Witbank on conscription from Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and all over Southern Africa. With them they brought a multitude of traditional musical styles which merged with Zulu vocal music, Mbube. A rootsy guitar and percussion style resulted called Marabi and, in the Transvaal region, it came to be known as Kwela.

"The church played an important part in our musical education – all funeral and weddings would become musical events, and the school choirs gave people an important grounding in singing."

But the biggest inspiration in the incipient Mbaqanga styles (the popular music of the townships) was swing.

"We listened voraciously to Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Louis Jordan, Count Basie etc. Just as in the mid Fifties it was the bebop masters, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, who inspired us."

Hugh Masekela's longing to be a musician was to be realised largely thanks to Father Huddleston. He was the chaplain at St Peters Secondary School where Hugh was a "problem student" and a human rights campaigner. He got hold of a trumpet for





Hugh from the Johannesburg Native Municipal Band and arranged for its band leader, Old Man Sowsa, to give Hugh his first lessons.

Then, Huddleston extracted a whole range of instruments from MGM chief Spiro Skules and the Father Huddleston Band was formed. Hugh Masekela's main tutor was Kippie Moketsi, a stunning sax player who he thinks is the greatest musician ever. He also met trombonist Jonas Gwanga and Dollar Brand.

Father Huddleston was deported in 1955 because of his political views. The Nationalist Party had come to power and was instigating fully mature apartheid policies which included the Group Areas Act. Hugh and Gwanga formed The Merry Makers Of Spring, integrating as much of the bebop styles which Dizzy was sending them from the States into the framework of Mbaqanga Jazz. But the band which was to make Hugh Masekela a nineteen-year-old trumpet star was Alfred Herbert's African Jazz Revue.

Mbaqanga ranged from the left-of-field jazz styles, very much South Africa's Swing. A big-band sound was transmuted by tight, springy guitar lines shadowed by acoustic guitar and bass, and light time keeping drums characterised by The Transvaal Rocking Jazz Stars and Rex Ntuli, to the flute and penny whistle centred styles of Boy Masaka and Black Mamba-zo. But it was the Zulu vocal of the Dark City Sisters, Dorothy Masuka, the Flying Jazz Queens and Miriam Makeba (who Hugh married) which was the most popular type of Mbaqanga.

"The Revue had all the top singers in it and we were the backing band. We used to play all over SA and were the first black show which the authorities allowed to be viewed by whites and mixed races."

Feeling hidebound by the restrictions surrounding the revue-style Mbaqanga, Masekela and Gwanga left, teaming up with Dollar Brand to form The Jazz Epistles. They were the first black band to record an LP in SA, all the recording till then having been on 78s.

The Jazz Epistles' music was "township bebop". Brand stepped in for Monk and Hugh Masekela for Miles Davis. But, paradoxically, as township jazz was expanding its horizons, music's political potential was in the process of being severely curtailed.

Sharpeville symbolised the end of the period when SA's black majority thought it might be possible to gain equality by legal means. Apartheid could not be tolerated any more, townships weren't homes, they were prisons. The Spear Of The Nation, the militant wing of the OAU, was formed in 1961 and Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in 1962.

Both Dollar Brand and Hugh Masekela got out. There was no foreseeable future for musicians, all gatherings of more than ten people having been banned (making even an average Mbaqanga band rehearsal illegal!).

Johnny Dankworth (who Hugh met in SA in 1955, only to be deported a few months later), and Harry Belafonte procured a passport for Hugh and a place at the Guildhall, London. He only stayed a few months before transferring to the Manhattan School of Music.

"Jazz was what I wanted to play and at Manhattan I formed a quartet with Larry Willis on piano, Hal Dobson on bass and Henry Jenkins on drums."

Miriam Makeba had also left SA and Hugh worked on her first few LPs. The quartet was ideally suited for opening at the Village Gate when singers such as Nina Simone, Sarah Vaughan, Aretha Franklin or Miriam were headlining.

The first LP under his own name *Trumpet African* came out on Mercury which was followed by *The Americanisation of Ooga Booga* on MGM.

"An old friend, Tom Wilson, was responsible for the contract with MGM. He'd seen us at the Gate and wanted to capture the music live."

The record didn't sell in New York but it did in California. So Hugh, his quartet and Stuart Levine (a friend from the music school who had produced all his records since), moved out there. They formed Chisa Records and the basic quartet, plus some sessioners, recorded four more albums in the mid to late Sixties.

The feel of these records was very much the West Coast "cool



jazz" groove. Perhaps Hugh was concerned with exploring paths which were new to him but, during this period, his powerfully lyrical trumpet playing and style of arrangement became submerged in the mannered language of cool.

"What I was intending to play was improvisatory jazz which was an extension of township music. But it came out a different way because I didn't have South African musicians. We couldn't capture the SA situation easily or convincingly."

But, if it was only the lack of musicians, then Masekela was unlucky. The drummer Makhaya Ntshoko, trombonist Jonas Gwanga and the popular Mbaqanga songwriter-composer Caiphus Semanya all worked with him, the "Union Of South Africa" being set up hopefully to activate the right "feel", the right spontaneity. But it was something more simple. With no structure in the USA either musical or social for pure African music to define itself, Hugh Masekela and others were in a limbo. The only way to recharge would be to return. In 1972, with his mind not fully made up, Hugh went to London with Ntshoko, Larry Willis and Eddie Gomez. Here, they made the LP *Home Is Where The Music Is* with fellow SA emigré Dudu Pukwana. The album is full of dense and brilliantly colourful music scapes, as if the two horn players were playing their nostalgia off against each other, their love for their country and their hate and bitterness for what was going on there. All these moods surface; Hugh's trumpet is at its most movingly soulful; a vivid lyricism in full flight, and Dudu wrenching his emotions from the alto.

The pieces written by Africans - Semanya's "Nomali", Miriam Makeba's "Unhome" and the Guinean Toure's "Mine-



# BLACK MASKS, WHITE MASKS

THE OTHER great theatrical sensation of the Fifties after *Waiting for Godot* and *Look Back in Anger* – was Frenchman Jean Genet's *The Blacks*, an extraordinary bid to grasp the complexities of colour and race. The play was prefaced by a strange "stage direction":

*This play, written, I repeat, by a white man, is intended for a white audience, but if – which is unlikely – it is ever performed before a black audience, then a white person male or female, should be invited every evening. The organiser of the show should welcome him formally, dress him in ceremonial costume and lead him to his seat, preferably in the front row of the stalls. The actors will play for him. A spotlight should be focussed upon this symbolic white throughout the performance.*

*But what if no white person accepted? Then let white masks be distributed to the black spectators as they enter the theatre. And if the blacks refuse, then let a dummy be used*

There have been few better images of the black artist's dilemma and that of his (most predominantly *his*) audience, trapped in masks of an alien colour or forced to sit in the shadow of a spotlight, white-critical presence.

It was the paradox and dilemma that the black political theorist Frantz Fanon identified in his anti-colonialist tract, *Black Skin, White Masks*.



IN THE Fifties jazz and the men who produced it leaked into the white American unconscious as the perfect symbol of the dark side of life, the subterranean drives and emotions repressed by white society. Jazz was, so the myth ran, free, spontaneous, uncluttered by formality or intellect. The black arts – the pun was never far away – had no independent status. For white critics, they represented the far side of the cultural mirror.

Philosophically, the Fifties, in France and the USA, were dominated by Genet's friend Jean-Paul Sartre and by the ideas of existentialism: that people created themselves in action not



by what they were in abstract essence; that the past provided few answers to living, moral or otherwise; that people forged links by a kind of telepathic awareness of each other's existence

White writers were not slow to see the applicability that allowed them to elevate jazz musicians into *white* American existentialists – creating, improvising, *now!* guiltless, pure energy – while quietly dispensing with their "irrelevant" historical past. The white view was neatly caught in a passage by Henry James (whose grasp of America's underside always shows through the polite surface) used as the epigraph to black novelist James Baldwin's *Another Country*:

*They strike one, above all, as giving no account of themselves in any terms consecrated by human use – to this inarticulate state they probably form, collectively, the most unprecedented of monuments, abusable the masters of what they think, what they feel, what they want, what they suppose themselves to be saying.*

That inarticulacy, a head-bowed shuffling silence, was what the white man expected and demanded of the black. And if no-one paid much attention to the last of James's list, the white mythologisers had few doubts in other directions – what "they" wanted was feeling, thought was irrelevant, feeling specifically violent and sexual.



IT WAS Norman Mailer, a white (uneasily) Jewish novelist who tried to give the "American existentialist" a clearer outline. In the mid-Fifties, he turned away from traditional Marxist politics (which had never taken root in America anyway) to a new proletariat – the hipsters, beats and hustlers, the jazz musicians and street gangs who, if neither thoughtful or coherent, at least embodied the new god: energy. America in that decade was prosperous, dull and deeply paranoid, ripe for racial myths. Mailer saw in blacks the only way to short circuit the nation's slow spiral into oblivion.

He created the "White Negro", not this time the black forced to don a white mask but (adjective shunted) a white adopting



the habits and energies of the black. Jazz, for Mailer, was "the music of orgasm", a way of breaking down barriers in the mind and the self, a way of escaping social responsibilities. Black meant razor, rape, night, life improvised to the second, beyond the law, revolution of the guts and spirit rather than of the mind, jazz was the aural echo of that, a mysterious communication closed to white ears. Except for the White Negro.

To exonerate white critics to a degree, there were blacks who were willing to subscribe to the mythology of the sexual and energetic superiority of black males (and, incidentally, the sexual mythology of the White Woman, infinitely desirable, yet untouchable). Eldridge Cleaver, in *Soul on Ice*, a decade after Mailer, swallowed him intact. Cleaver even boasted (admitting seems like boasting) of his rape of a white woman and lent a certain dubious credence to the stereotype. Such was his absorption in a borrowed myth that when he eventually returned from political exile in Tangier, Cleaver virtually kissed the ground at his feet and, "lolling" wildly, proclaimed the United States the best and freest country in the world. His last contribution to humanity (a heavily ironic one) was the "Cleave All", unisex dungarees



THE WHITE Negro was, ultimately, not much more than a souped-up rather nasty play *au fait*, a hanger-on, a cultural tourist. Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*, the Beats' bible, set the contest and tone.

*At late evening, I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Walker in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night.*

The ability to walk among the "jazz shacks" thus rhapsodising without the slightest recognition of the grinding poverty and degradation, the complete lack of freedom to do the same in the "white section" seems sufficient to blow the gaff on Kerouac. Apart from records all "Dean Moriarty" ever encounters is a scratch band or two led by gawky young blacks called "Prez" and Charlie Parker look alikes. When Dean and Sal, the narrator, eventually find their jazz god, he is curiously a blind white Englishman, George Shearing.

There probably never was anything closer to a real white negro than clarinetist Mezz Mezzrow who reversed the usual business of "passing" (if you were pale-skinned or straight-haired enough) for white by passing for black. In the States, the south in particular, the equation was clear: any black blood — all black blood. Mezzrow's gesture was complicated; the point, again was that the positions couldn't be reversed. All he risked was ridicule, a black trying to "pass" risked a rope.



MORE verbal echoes are a suspect basis for argument but both James Baldwin and novelist Ralph Ellison (in a collection of essays) use a striking prepositional phrase for the nature both of group improvisation and Negro life in general. "Within and against" Solos occur within the harmonic pattern and, as improvisations, against it. Blacks live within their own separate culture but also, since it is stigmatised, second-class, ghettoised, against it. If to be black is shameful, then solidarity of any sort is a complex gesture. Far from being a guarantee of authenticity, black skin in a white society must seem an ambivalent property. Only a white, with a romantic philosophy of racial energy, could think otherwise.



"... ABYSMAL the mystery ... of what they suppose themselves to be saying" We have lost, perhaps, some of that sense of jazz is a code, a secret whisper *within* the closed group. For it also works against it, as some kind of communication outward.

A jazzman is still a man, still oppressed by anything, his own colour or someone else's, that takes away his freedom.

Jazz has no particular social content. It isn't "about" black history or black hatreds or ills. It isn't protest music. It would be naïve to expect it to be or to express surprise that so few jazz musicians have articulated specific political ideas or aims. When in 1966 *Village Voice* jazz critic Mike Zwerin wrote: "I think that a number of avant-garde jazz musicians would be better suited in politics — it would be a more direct expression for them", he expressed one side of an old debate, the relation of political ideas to art. A race that has been traditionally unwilling when not actually forbidden to vote or to take part in civic issues is unlikely to express political ideas too directly. It is white guilt that assumes all black acts — musical, social, literary — must express rage. To insist on anger is perhaps the worst oppression of all: a rage-filled and twisted mask.

Zwerin's point applies to *any* music. A form — sonata, minuet or blues — may somehow reflect the society that threw it up but it does not "express" that society. Neither is music a good vehicle for ideas. It is white critics who have sought to associate jazz with specific guilts, energies and ideas, none of which has anything to do intrinsically with the music. Jazz becomes political only under external pressure. It's a convenient excuse for avoiding the real political responsibility, much like suggesting that black athletic success *proves* repression gone.



LeROI JONES' (now Imamu Amiri Baraka) mysteriously titled play *Dutchman* provides a last parable. Lula, white, meets Clay, black, on the subway. She flirts and taunts him, about his sex, his colour, his polite inarticulacy. Cracking visibly, Clay pleads, "If I'm a middle-class fake white man, let me be. And let me be in the way I want". But then, the appalling outburst, "I'll rip your lousy breasts off". Rage under pressure.

*Old bald-headed ofays popping their fingers . . . and don't know yet what they're doing. They say 'I love Bessie Smith'. And don't even understand that Bessie Smith is saying 'Kiss my black ass, kiss my black unruly ass' . . . and if you don't know that, it's you that's doing the kissing. Charlie Parker? Charlie Parker. All the hip white boys scream for Bird. And Bird saying, 'Up your ass, feeble minded ofay. Up your ass'. And they talk about the tortured genius of Charlie Parker.*

Lula takes no more, melodramatically pulls a knife and stabs Clay to the heart. The other blacks in the compartment immediately resume the time-honoured "Uncle Tom" pose of dumb servility.

Jazz, Clay says, is an alternative to violence. But his speech is important more in context than in content. It is deliberately provoked from him. It is, precisely, Parker's story. White society wants more than polite and pretty music. It wants a racial spectacle and a hint of danger. It actively seeks an edge of violence, knowing that it holds all the loaded guns. It provokes a situation in which black musicians, as at Minton's in the late Forties, retreat into an ever more complex and exclusive style. If bebop was revolutionary, it took the standard route: one step back for two forward. It was a triumph for music, but at the expense of a greater social isolation that made it all the harder for music to build its bridges.

Once the stereotype is fulfilled, it is destroyed, not usually by a knife to the heart, more usually by the wrong rewards. Parker, after all, died overweight and burnt out in a white woman's bedroom. He lived out someone else's legend. If Bird lives! he lives by terms he never made himself. He joins the ranks of Ralph Ellison's "invisible men" not science fiction spooks but the men society chooses no longer to see. By any lights but its own.



BLACK masks, white masks, they hide the face of the music. Until we do without them, the music will be muffled and distorted, put to alien and dangerous ends. **Brian Morton**



Tatum (p); Tiny Grimes (q); Stewart (b).



pattern that shifts almost imperceptibly from foot step to African polyrhythms. Dyan's bass is more reserved than usual with him but, none the less, effective. Cjerstad, who has perhaps the easiest task, has a good tone and a fine sense of drama.

Probably the best testament is the way Djeliah told the attendances over two long sides. **Brian Morton**

## FRANCO ET LE T.P.O.K. JAZZ:

### A L'Ancienne Belgique

(Edipop Pop 031)

No personnel or recording date given (probably Brussels - 1984).

Francis Albert Murphy has been leading a festive "Pops" band for almost thirty years now, and it is at the French club, "L'Ancienne Belgique", that he organizes the "Jazz Festival". It is a very good idea, and the band has been playing a variety of jazz styles, from swing to bebop, and even some modern jazz. The band is made up of some of the best musicians in Belgium, and they have been playing for many years.

The band is made up of some of the best musicians in Belgium, and they have been playing for many years. The band is made up of some of the best musicians in Belgium, and they have been playing for many years.

been absorbed as one element in a distinct yet personal (and massively influential) style. Such traces of jazz remain detectable mainly in the horn arrangements and in the "seven" sections of the songs where guitarists (and sometimes a sax) weave improvisational patterns over a repeated melodic phrase. The resulting mix is an intensely melodic yet compulsively danceable music played with an unmatched relaxed ease.

My favourite on this album is "Pesa Posit on Na Ye". It only because it features Franco's deep-toned vocals (he has one of the great voices to best effect). The other three tracks, however, are all fine examples of his magnificent music.

**Dave Ramsden**



**"Over the Rainbow"; "In a Sentimental Mood"; "There Will Never Be Another You"; "September Song"; "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams"; "I Cover the Waterfront"; "Moon Song"; "Don't Blame Me".**

**Tatum (p).**

The latter two of Adelaide Hall's four charming 1932 performances (Collectors' Items), with the horns absent, are slightly the more informative. Both pianists are evident but Tatum, expectedly dominates. Then twenty-three - pace the reference books, he was born in 1909 - he is far too young yet accompanies conscientiously so the direction taken by his talent only becomes clearer in the recently discovered "Tiger Rag" (of there had been thought that Tatum's 1933 titles were his earliest recorded solos).

Comparison between this and the phenomenal 1939 Affinity reading shows for how long and with what results he was prepared to continue developing and refining a basic concept. Even the 1933 "Tiger" reveals pianistic and musical improvements. Equally, he could abandon a given approach completely, try the two Smithsonian "Hallelujahs" with his 1939 version (Black Lion BLP50194). In fact, the two 1945 accounts, primarily recorded with minutes of each other, contain important variations at many levels of the music, proving the well-established contention that Tatum repeated things mechanically year in year out, as a case for incessant listening.

Generally the 1934 and 1937 ten-vinyl Collectors' and Affinity demonstrate his early methods well. We think that following "stride" traditions which continued, however obliquely, at Monk, then clearly, always present, no matter how richly decorated in later, is a simple melody and this, as one aspect of Tatum's work became ever more subtle. It relates to the four or five frequently present rhythmic and melodic flourishes of the stride, otherwise how he decides the follow-on or the piece of "Beautiful Love" with freedom is more than a matter of choice. The more recently, as it is on the state of those early years soiled and suppressed through and for tuning to the 1939-40 performances on Smithsonian and especially Affinity, we find jazz that is poised, elegant, sophisticated like Norman Chittleson. Every piece Tatum had settled for crowd-pleasing, instead, toward display.

Rosette typifies the high integration he achieved with his partner as a feature. Extracting from the effect of the whole, despite the extraordinary textural diversity of, say, "Big Boy", his music's spaciousness is exemplified by

"Sweet Lorraine" and the beat is always stated with a great variety of on-phases. Indeed, the left hand's contrapuntal relationship with the right deserves the closest attention. Sometimes the bass line and sometimes the tenor voice is accented, and this can change from beat to beat, the whole shaded by a fine technique with the sustaining pedal. Each piece is an integrated whole, although the material and the expression with which Tatum invests it varies enormously. Thus "St Louis Blues" starts as an infinitely delicate and this points towards the "Mr Freddy Blues" of a decade later, where pianistic refinement takes perfectly, and a most paradoxically, with the deepest roots of this music.

Besides obviously finding satisfaction in the amazing networks of relationship which shape

all these solo performances, Tatum was also stimulated by links between different pieces, as between "Dardanella" and, in the Shoestring version, "Exactly Like You". More intriguing, because more ambivalent, are the correspondences between "Memories of You" and MacDowell's "To a Wild Rose", explicit in the Smithsonian reading, implicit on the 20th Century Fox account, which further alludes to a movement of Dvorak's Ninth Symphony! Far from being funny irrelevances, some of Tatum's quotations reveal unexpected musical meanings.

It follows from this preoccupation with structure that he was not much interested in merely running the changes, although "Exactly Like You" finds him playing neo-bop single note lines at length. (Having forgotten the reading to be heard on Shoestring, the Smithsonian annotators wrongly claim the version to be unique in the pianist's recorded output.)

Actually, no Tatum connoisseur could long be satisfied with the simplifications which guitar and bass thus entailed, however one evaluates an occasional band success like the 1944 "Deep Purple". What with Grimes's or Barksdale's jivey interludes and Stewart's ineptly clownish vocalise, there was too much cuteness.

The chorus shared with Collins on "Lonesome Graveyard" hints at things the trio might have done but the most musical guitar trio performances were done with Paul, later despised for his hugely successful multi-recorded novelty pieces. He played with more rhythmic flexibility and greater inventiveness than the guitarists of Tatum's regular trios. The pianist is thereby encouraged to perform with better continuity than was usual for him in this format, and herein's phenomenal accompaniment to Paul in "Lady Be Good". This Shoestring LP also carries the longest and best of Tatum's several versions of "Humoresque".

Vocal accompaniment involved simplification too, but of an entirely positive kind. In support of the urbane Turner (in print), let the horns take their turns with the obbligatos. With Tatum's commentary flows tirelessly clarifying everything. On "Stomping" and "Balance" there are instances of Thomas's "cut off sense" - are you sm?

Relaxed in a different way was the 1950 party at which Tatum set down his last significant body of solo recordings. Despite the informality, or perhaps because of it, he was still challenging himself. His previous account of "Just Like a Butterfly" (Papp 2310 811) is on C, this new one is in G flat. It is one of three hitherto unissued performances, from that occasion, and on the Smithsonian LP which also carries two others now heard complete for the first time.

On 20th Century Fox and all other issues, only the first choruses of "Jitterbug Waltz", the first twenty-four bars of the second and the last eight of the fourth survive, whereas on Smithsonian we get all four choruses complete. It makes a rather striking difference. Similarly, on 20th Century Fox, "Waterfront" is a relict of a production, first chorus and a few notes at the close, these being restored by the excellent Smithsonian institution. As these 1950 solos form a kind of final testament, it is to be hoped that the others will, in due course, emerge in an edited form also. However, in the performances listed above, and in the fragments of a certain dubious process samplings from a once broad and swiftly flowing river.

**Max Harrison**

## Pieces of Eight (Smithsonian R029).

**Recorded: New York - August 1939.**

**"It Had to be You"; "Oh, You Crazy Moon"; "Over the Rainbow".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: Los Angeles - August 1939.**

**"Day In, Day Out".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: Frenchie's Pink Pig, Milwaukee April 1944.**

**"Exactly Like You".**

**Tatum (p); Grimes (g); Stewart (b).**

**Recorded: California - c. May 1945.**

**"Hallelujah" (2 takes); "Memories of You"; "Yesterdays".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: Beverly Hills, California - 3 July, 1955.**

**"Jitterbug Waltz"; "I Cover the Waterfront"; "Love for Sale"; "Just Like a Butterfly"; "Sweet Lorraine".**

**Tatum (p).**

## Piano Mastery (Shoestring SS105)

**Recorded: Los Angeles - c. 1943-44.**

**"Exactly Like You".**

**Tatum (p); Grimes (g); Stewart (b).**

**Recorded: Los Angeles - c. 1944.**

**"Jada"; "I've Found a New Baby"; "Lady, Be Good"; "Somebody Loves Me".**

**Tatum (p), Les Paul (g); Clinton Nordqvist (b).**

**Recorded: Los Angeles - c. 1944.**

**"Humoresque"; "It Had to be You".**

**Paul, Nordqvist absent.**

**Recorded: Hollywood - c. 1945.**

**"Begin the Beguine".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: Hollywood - 21 January, 1946.**

**"Where or When"; "Night and Day"; "Poor Butterfly".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: The Embers, New York - c. 1951.**

**"Don't Blame Me"; Gershwin Medley.**

**Tatum (p).**

## Memories of Art Tatum Vol. 2 (20th-Century Fox T608).

**Recorded: Beverly Hills, California - 16 April, 1950.**

**"Mr Freddy Blues"; "Memories of You".**

**Tatum (p).**

**Recorded: Beverly Hills, California - 3 July, 1955.**

**"My Heart Stood Still"; "Jitterbug Waltz";**









with the two other trumpeters, the first is worth (for example) a further sleeve note to the BYG Records format of Glicker's 1958 collection *Top Pops* (SN 1092) with the rest of the early 1950s recordings. A second sleeve note to the same format is a printed 'sleeve note' by the publisher, which is better than the original one, and the original one is better than the original one.

At the time of the original recording, the first of the two other trumpeters was a young man, and the second was a young man. The original recording is a printed 'sleeve note' by the publisher, which is better than the original one, and the original one is better than the original one.

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Kenneth Ansell

#### JIMMY KNEPPER SEXTET

##### I Dream Too Much

(Soul Note SN 1092)

Recorded: New York - 10, 11 February and 2 March, 1984.

John Eckert (tp); Jimmy Knepper (tbn); John Clark (french horn); Sir Roland Hanna (p); George Mraz (b); Billy Hart (d).

The character of Knepper's band is determined by its unusual front line, with french horn and no saxophones. Unfortunately, the arrangements don't exploit the unusual sonorities available and the ensemble sound is heavy. The french horn has rarely been successfully assimilated into jazz. John Clark manages as well as most but the nature of the music, which is largely hard bop, leads him to use the instrument as a kind of deep-voiced trumpet, with the result that it sounds ungainly at times. His certainly is overshadowed by the two other brass players.

But *I Dream Too Much* is, nevertheless, a welcome addition to Jimmy Knepper's recorded output. The leader's undemonstrative impressiveness, eschewing effects playing for coherence of line and beauty of tone. Roland Hanna's impressive throughout and George Mraz gives further evidence that he is now among the first rank of bass players. Like Jimmy Knepper, he shows how much scope remains for invention within the familiar idiom of this album.

Jeremy Crump

#### STEVE LACY TWO, FIVE AND SIX:

##### Blinks

(hat ART 2006)

Recorded: Zurich - 12 February, 1983.

Lacy (ss); Steve Potts (as, ss), Bobby Few (p); Irene Aebi (vln, cello); Jean-Jaques Avenel (b); Oliver Johnson (d).

We should be grateful to hat and their ART for supplying such a regular stream of Lacy. *Blinks* is no more than an inventive re-statement of the way for this prolific musician's already enjoyable output. The material has been heard on previous occasions. Three Points, however, is a typically serpentine duet for the two saxophones, dates back to 'Points' (see *Chant Du Monde* 12X 74680), and the music is a long, unusual, and colorful gait for the whole set. Few doesn't participate. The Wharfedales, for some reason, so the sparring between Lacy and Potts is thrown into sharper relief. For 'Wickets', the latter begins a course of convolution or, at least, that tracks into a glib, bluesy blues before the leader's effortlessly dry answer.

Claves, premiered on Prospekt, is a series of Afterthoughts of the piano and blown bottles that suggests an Andrew Cyrille montage. The group capers in to a few out that twists the virtuosic & free jazz and funk of the perpetrators of the title into a tangle. Only George Lewis's insistent flute, a constant reminder of the great man's highway.

Richard Cook

#### DIDIER LEVALLET OCTET

##### Scoop

(In & Out laO 1006)

Recorded: Theater & L'Ecole Nationale de Musique d'Angoulême, France - 11 & 12 May, 1983.

Didier Levallet (b); Steve Lacy (ss); Tony Coe (clt, ss); Mark Charig (clt, alto horn); Radu Malfatti (tenor tbn); Gerard Buquet (tuba, contrabass tbn); Gerard Marais (g); Tony Oxley (perc).

Levallet has assembled a formidable pool of talent for his octet, yet the promise of the personnel is never quite fulfilled on this recording. On a brace of Levallet compositions - ranging from the racing, bumpy themes of 'Steppenwolf' and 'Azmat' (pt 3) to the meandering 'Sweet Lacy' - the musicians acquit themselves well but without excitement is perhaps they should.

There are, of course, exceptions. Marais's guitar work seems continually to challenge the catchily-arguable of Levallet's arrangements. Charig and Marais combine effectively in the first part of 'Sweet Lacy'. Malfatti's pipping and distorting in the second Coe's snarling re-entrance 'Steppenwolf' to the ominous haunting

'Memoires' - Levallet's most distinguished writing from this set - he is rewarded with a lovely lacy solo which delves into all the dark corners of his composition, probing and perceptive.

What we have in 'Scoop' then, is an enjoyable enough album, one which even grows with repeated plays, but one which ultimately fails to satisfy completely. Niggling at the back of the mind is the thought that from three musicians we expected just a little bit more. And the impression remains that perhaps if they had played a few more gigs together and had the opportunity to relax as a group with these compositions, and only then recorded the album that promise would have been fulfilled.

Kenneth Ansell

#### SAMBA MAPANGALA AND ORCHESTRE VIRUNGA: Malako

(Earthworks ERT 1006)

Recorded: Nairobi - undated

Samba Mapangala (lead voc); Fataki (voc); Lawi Somana (solo g); Manicho (b); Rodie, Atei (saxes). Other musicians not credited.

Samba Mapangala is originally from Zaïre. His band are named after Virunga, a volcanic mountain in the region where he was born. Despite receiving some acclaim as a vocalist with Orchestre Super Bel, he felt it was too difficult to reach even success in Zaïre in a scene dominated by the veteran bandleaders Franco and Rochereau. As a result he moved to Kenya and formed Orchestre Virunga which was immediately successful.

Steepest rooted firmly in the soukous of Zaïre, the move to Kenya produced a distinctive fresh sound quite different from most of Zaïre's bands. The accent is still on melody and rhythm but with a lighter touch that suits Samba Mapangala's sweet-toned voice to perfection. Lawi Somana's lead guitar has all the characteristic melodic elegance of soukous but is mixed more softly so that the twin saxes of Rodie and Atei play a more prominent role.

This album puts together four of the band's biggest East African hits, including 'Malako' which has made Samba Mapangala known as 'The Malako Man' throughout the region. All four tracks are excellent, especially the superb 'Ahmet Sabti' with its highly unusual arrangement.

Dave Ramsden

#### HUGH MASEKELA

##### Techno-Bush

(JIVE AFRICA HIP 11)

Recorded: Botswana - undated, probably early 1984.

John "Blackie" Selolwane (g, voc); Banjo Mosele (rhythm g); Bongani Nxele (d); Zakes Mchunu (b); Moses Ngwenya (organ); Gaspar Lawal (perc); Stella Khumalo, Mandisa Dlanga, Tsepo Tshola, Mopati Tsienyane (voc); Hugh Masekela (horns, perc, voc, kbds); Peter Harris (Fairlight CMI Music Computer).

Anyone unfamiliar with the long career of distinguished South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela (see Masekela feature this issue) is likely to be puzzled by this album, or even to reject it simply as deliberately commercialised world-beat crossover material. Especially in the current climate of interest in so-called 'ethnic' African music it would be easy to dismiss this as South African music diluted for Western tastes without realising that all modern African popular music is the result of a more or less successful blending of often surprising influences: everyone from Jim Reeves to Django Reinhardt and beyond have played their part. Hugh Masekela has worked in every context from the most earthy varieties of Zaïrean town-jazz to the fringes of MOR.

This album like most of his previous work demonstrates that diversity of influences from the electro-disc influenced 'Don't Give Up On Me' to the more conventionally African 'Mothalepa' with hints of calypso and many other styles along the way. The most overtly commercial step is the inclusion of the familiar 'Let's Never Sleep' and 'Grazing In The Grass'. It may not be Masekela's finest work but it approaches without pretence perfection. It is thoroughly enjoyable.

Dave Ramsden











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Keith Shadwick

### ARCHIE SHEPP SEXTET

**My Man**  
(Ispre 06)

Recorded: Paris - 3 November, 1983.

Archie Shepp (ss, flt, p); Charles McGee (t); Charles Eubanks (p); Santi DeBriano (b); John Betsch (d); Michelle Wiley (voc).

Having given us his view of Parker, the blues and spirituals, Archie Shepp offers a tribute to Sidney Bechet. Except for brief excursions on piano and flute, he confines himself to Bechet's horn, the soprano. Three of the tracks are Bechet's composition, the other two feature the blues singing of Michelle Wiley. Both "My

Man" and "Blues for Bechet" (a tune by Shepp, not to be confused with Coltrane's piece of the same name) are slow blues of the rootsiest type.

The Bechet tunes are characteristic of the music he played in the Fifties in France and all three are available on *Sidney Bechet Volume 1* (Jazz Reactivation) for enlightening comparison. They are strong melodies, the more so when stated by the composer with his domineering vibrato. Archie Shepp doesn't try to imitate Bechet's tone. Instead, he utilises a hesitant, almost querrulous tone. The explicit nostalgia of the themes, which Bechet could render with a defiance reminiscent of Piaf, is rendered in a sorrowing, mournful way. Even given the reflective manner of Shepp's playing in recent years, this is an album reluctant to surrender its secret. Shepp is introspective to the point of self-indulgence. His treatment of the material has none of the illuminating eccentricity of the way he played Ellington in the Sixties, in terms of playing straight, Charles McGee and Charles Eubanks steal the show.

Jeremy Crump

### JOHNNY MBIZO DYANI

**Born Under The Heat**  
(Dragon DRLP 68)

Recorded: Av-Elektronik, Stockholm - 18 November, 1983.

Johnny Mbizo Dyani (b, p); Ulf Adåker (tpt); Krister Andersson (ts); Peter Shimi Radise (ts); Charles Davis (as); Thomas Östergren (el b); Gilbert Matthews (d); Mose Gwangwa (tbn).

### HARRY MILLER QUINTET

**DOWN SOUTH**  
(Vara Jazz 4213).

Recorded: Vara Radio Studio 2-3 March, 1983.

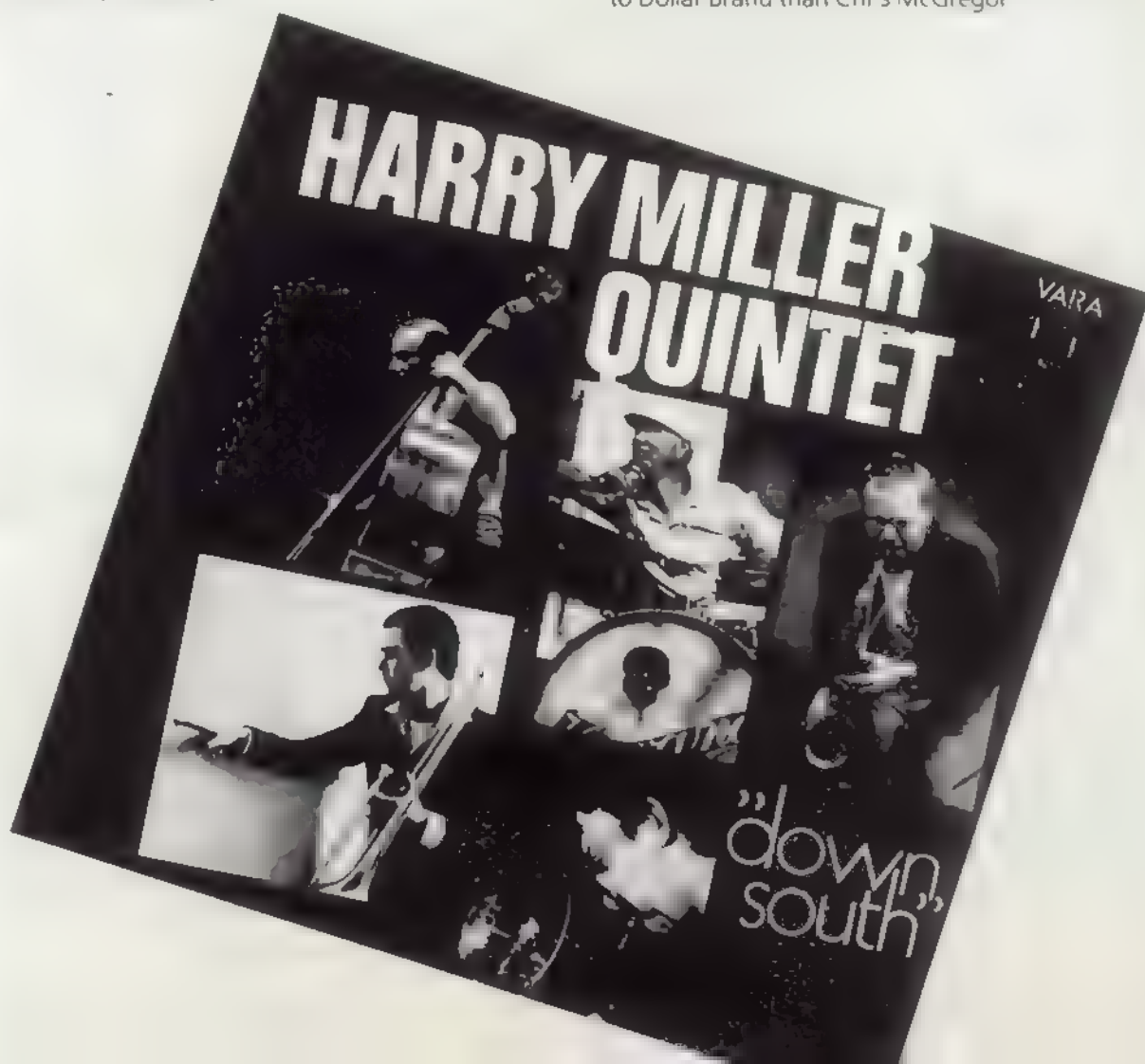
Harry Miller (b); Marc Charig (cnt, alto horn); Wolter Wierbos (tbn); Sean Bergin (ts, as, ss); Han Bennink (perc).

Dyani and Miller - two South African bass players who quit their homeland in order that their work and music could flourish free of the constraints of a racist society. Both chose Britain and, having settled here, helped to propel the British modern jazz renaissance of the late Sixties and early Seventies with such groups as the Blue Notes, the Brotherhood of Breath and the Ogun family bands. Yet in a sad echo of their departure from South Africa both were forced to quit Britain and base themselves in Europe in order to survive and develop musically.

It is interesting to compare the work of these two bass players, despite similar sources and resources they create music which is quite different in character, these differences reflecting in some ways Dyani and Miller's different careers and preoccupations. Both have continued to draw heavily on the folk influences of their homeland, finding them a rich compositional springboard for their writing. Additionally, both have drawn white European musicians into their various ensembles.

But this is the point at which their musics diverge. Their choice of musicians to work with on these sessions is, perhaps, significant and indicative of their differing concerns. Dyani has drawn together a group of very capable Swedish musicians and fashioned them into a coherent group whose ensemble and solo work reveals an understanding and respect of the folk forms at the heart of Dyani's compositions. In contrast, Miller has assembled his quintet from the pool of European free improvisors and they combine in a group with a strong individual identity as they explore Miller's compositions.

Dyani's group administer his wilting, carefully orchestrated compositions with acumen. "Winnie Mandela" is warm and tender, the skippy rhythm and sound-effects (of children and animals) of "Lament For Crossroads" offset by a fine tenor solo and "Song For The Workers" upbeat and uptempo. A piano solo "Wish You Sunshine" by Dyani not only shows him to be a perfectly adequate pianist but places him closer to Dollar Brand than Chris McGregor.





Temperamentally, Miller's quintet is closer to the latter. They infiltrate the sprung rhythms characteristic of the folk culture and breathe vigorous life into them. There is a wilder, more volatile interpretation of the form, yet they remain true to the spirit of the music. Capable of negotiating the twists and turns of such titles as "Flame Tree" with ease, they elsewhere adopt a more ragged interpretation that perfectly suits and accentuates the celebratory quality of "Mofolo" or "Down South". Soloists are never left out in the cold: the ensemble works with them, probing and provoking. A startling integrity is similarly evoked in the granite lyricism of "Ikaya" or "Opportunities". As a group, the quintet all pool their creativity to achieve these ends but particular mention should be made of Bennink whose drumming; in partnership with Miller's bass work, combines the requisite fluidity with urgency and detail throughout.

In *Under The Heat and Down South* we have two strong albums by two strong composer/musicians. Both albums reflect the heritage of their mentors but do so in differing ways. It is as if Dyan remembers the sunshine, Miller the storm clouds that wait on the horizon, and it is this quality which gives *Down South* its more compelling cutting edge, its heart and intensity.

Sadly, this was Harry Miller's last album, on 27 November, 1983, the vehicle in which he was travelling was thrown from the road by high winds - he died on 16 December. In this recording he has a fitting testament.

Kenneth Ansell

#### ZOOT SIMS

**Quietly There/Zoot Sims Plays Johnny Mandel (Pablo 2310 903)**

**Recorded: Hollywood - 20 & 21 March, 1984.**

**Zoot Sims (ts); Victor Feldman (vib, perc); Mike Wofford (p); Chuck Berghofer (b); Nick Ceroli (d).**

With the depressing news of Zoot's most recent serious illness, this release comes as a welcome part compensation. This combination of his always-warm, ever swinging tenor and a fine collection of superior tunes by one of jazz's most neglected top writers produces, to no one's surprise, an album that will return at regular intervals to many a discerning turntable in the future.

Material like "Time For Love", "Emily", "Cinnamon" and "Low Life" is putty in the hands of a seasoned master like John Haley: accordingly, he takes full advantage of the great melodic and harmonic qualities of Mandel's compositions. He fairly sings the melody line of the first-named, flies with consummate ease through "Cinnamon", eases his way with controlled power and faultless timing during "Low", and sounds as if he's madly in love with the elegant "Emily".

The title tune finds Zoot eminently responsive to the beguiling Afro-Cuban setting and at his most relaxed for the eponymous Mandel tribute. Zoot's colleagues give him the kind of support he deserves, with the underrated Wofford turning in a series of fine piano solos that sparkle and tingle with the sheer joy of playing. Feldman gets off a couple of typically first-rate solos on vibes (just listen to the way he falls into his solo on "Zoot"). Nothing earth-shattering, maybe, but the kind of disc to have around at any time.

Stan Britt

#### FRANK WESS-FRANK FOSTER

**Two For the Blues**

**(Pablo 2310 905)**

**Recorded: Weston, Connecticut - 11 & 12 October, 1983.**

**Frank Wess (as, ts, flt); Frank Foster (ts, ss); Kenny Barron (p); Rufus Reid (b); Marvin Smith (d).**

A thoroughly professional collection of solid jazz making that is, thankfully, beyond category. The reunion of the two Franks - principal sax soloists during their many years together with the Basie Band - finds both men producing generally splendid work on their respective horns, without ever achieving music of death-defying importance.

Of the two, Foster registers more potently on tenor (he plays soprano only during Wess's Latin-ised "Bay Street"), his hard-swinging contributions to the majority of tracks brook no argument whatsoever as to his all-round ability - demonstrating, too, just how he has improved from his Basie days (even though he was a Top Tenor then). Wess's best playing is also on the larger horn, although his flute is as elegant as ever, on "Send In The Clowns". Curiously, perhaps, the Parker characteristics which informed his alto playing with Basie (pace "Fanta!") has been replaced by influences from an earlier period in jazz.

Carter ("Nancy"), Marshall Royal ("Your Beauty Is A Song Of Love", another FW original). As good are the efforts of the two principals, Barron's contributions lack absolutely nothing in comparison. Not surprisingly, he is a la Basie, during Heft's title tune, elsewhere, he is just Kenny Barron - which is to say he is a keyboardist whose all-round abilities continue to impress in practically any kind of musical surroundings. Reliable Rufus is just that, but watch out for mercurial Marvin, a young, unflashy drummer of no mean talent.

Stan Britt

The following have been released, or imported, since the last issue went to press. Except where a date is shown, they are believed to be recent recordings but no liability can be accepted for inaccurate information. Listing here does not preclude a subsequent review.

## NEW RELEASES

JOHN ABERCROMBIE *Night* (ECM 1272)  
 GEORGE ADAMS & DON PULLEN *Decisions* (Timeless SJP 205)  
 NAT ADDERLEY *That's Nat* (1955) (Savoy WL 70506)  
 PETE ALLEN (w/Beryl Bryden) *Jazzin' Around* (ARB 42)  
 GENE AMMONS *Early Visions* (1948-52) (Chess CXJD 6701)  
 JEAN LUC BARBIER *Dans La Ville Blanche* (Bridge Records B 1001)  
 COUNT BASIE (w/Lester Young) *At Newport* (1957) (Verve 2304 414)  
 ART BLAKEY *Mosaic* (1961) (Blue Note BST 84090), *Free For All* (1964) (Blue Note BST 84170)  
 LES BROWN *At The Cafe Rouge* (1944-45) (Giants of Jazz GOJ 1027)  
 BOB BROOKMEYER *Blues Hot And Cold* (1960) (Verve 821 550 1)  
 DONALD BYRD *The Cat Walk* (1961) (Blue Note BST 84075)  
 VLADIMIR CHEKASIN *Nostalgia* (Leo LR 119)  
 SONNY CLARK *Leapin' And Lopin'* (1961) (Blue Note BST 84091)  
 JACK DE JOHNETTE *Album Album* (ECM 1280)  
 DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND *My Feet Can't Fail Me Now* (Concord GW 3005)  
 PIERRE DORGE *Brikama* (Steeplechase SCS 1188)  
 KENNY DORHAM *Whistle Stop* (1961) (Blue Note BLP 4063)  
 JIMMY & TOMMY DORSEY *Spotlighting The Fabulous Dorseys* (1942-45) (Giants of Jazz GOJ 1023)  
 JOHNNY DYANI *Afrika* (Steeplechase SCS 1186)  
 BOBBY ENRIQUEZ *Live! In Tokyo* (PRT N 6552)  
 JOE FARRELL & LOUIS HAYES *Vim 'n' Vigor* (Timeless SJP 197)  
 MITCH FORMAN (w/Bobby Hutcherson) *Full Circle* (Concord CJ 251)  
 CURTIS FULLER *Bluesette* (1959) (Savoy WL 70502)  
 LACY GIBSON/JOE CARTER *I Didn't Give A Damn If Whites Bought It! Ralph Bass Sessions Vol. 1* (1977) (Red Lightnin' RL 0050)  
 DIZZY GILLESPIE & SONNY STITT *Modern Jazz Sextet* (1955) (Verve 823 091 1)  
 NAT GONELLA *Mister Rhythm Man* (1934-35) (EMI EG 26 0188 1)

BENNY GOODMAN *Swingin' Down The Lane* (1939) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1033), *Command Performance* (1943-44) (Swing House SWH 46)  
 DEXTER GORDON *Our Man In Paris* (1964) (Blue Note BST 84146)  
 JOHNNY GRIFFIN *The Congregation* (1957) (Blue Note BLP 1580)  
 HERBIE HANCOCK *My Point Of View* (1962) (Blue Note BST 84126)  
 WOODY HERMAN *Live In New Orleans* (1951) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1022)  
 BILLIE HOLIDAY *For A Lady Named Billie* (1949-56) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1001)  
 HARRY JAMES *King Porter Stomp* (1942-48) (Hep HEP 31), *Saturday Night Swing* (1953-54) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1016)  
 JIMMY JOHNSON/EDDIE CLEARWATER *I Didn't Give A Damn If Whites Bought It! Ralph Bass Sessions Vol. 2* (1977) (Red Lightnin' RL 0051)  
 ELVIN JONES (w/Dave Liebman) *Earth Jones* (Palo Alto PA 8016)  
 HANK JONES *Relaxin' At Camarillo* (1956) (Savoy WL 70504)  
 DUKE JORDAN *Flight To Jordan* (1960) (Blue Note BST 84046)  
 LEE KONITZ *Motion* (1961) (Verve 821 553-1)  
 GENE KRUPA *The Exciting* (1944-45) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1028)  
 JACKIE McLEAN *Bluesnik* (1961) (Blue Note BST 84067), *New And Old Gospel* (1966) (Blue Note BST 84262)  
 GEORGE MELLY *The Many Moods of Melly* (PRT N 6550)  
 PAT METHENY *First Circle* (ECM 1278)  
 HANK MOBLEY *Soul Station* (1960) (Blue Note BST 84031)  
 MODERN JAZZ QUARTET/OSCAR PETERSON *At The Opera House* (1957) (Verve 823 092 1)  
 JAMES MOODY *Easy Living* (1958) (Chess CXJD 6702)  
 LEE MORGAN *The Sidewinder* (1963) (Blue Note BST 84157)  
 STEVE MORSE *Introduction* (Musician 960 369 1)  
 AMINA MYERS *Jumping In The Sugar Bowl* (Minor Music 002)

ANITA O'DAY *Hi Ho Trailin' Boot Whip* (1947) (Doctor Jazz FW 39418)  
 HARRY PARRY *Parry Opus* (1941-42) (EMI EG 26 0294 1)  
 BUD POWELL *The Amazing, Vol. 3* (1957) (Blue Note BST 81571)  
 TITO PUENTE *El Rey* (Concord CJP 250)  
 IKE QUEBEC *Blue And Sentimental* (1960) (Blue Note BST 84098)  
 QUINTET OF HOT CLUB OF FRANCE (1934-35) (Vogue 425 019)  
 SAM RIVERS *Fuchsia Swing Song* (1964) (Blue Note BST 84184)  
 MAX ROACH/ART BLAKEY *Percussion Discussion* (1957-58) (Chess CXJD 6703)  
 SHORTY ROGERS & BUD SHANK *Back Again* (Concept VL 1)  
 STACY ROWLES (w/Jimmy Rowles) *Tell It Like It Is* (Concord CJ 249)  
 DON SEBESKY *Full Circle* (Pye N 6551)  
 7TH AVENUE STOMPERS *Fidgety Feet* (1958) (Savoy WL 70509)  
 HORACE SILVER (w/Art Blakey) *Trio* (1952-53) (Blue Note BLP 1520)  
 JIMMY SMITH *Prayer Meetin'* (1963) (Blue Note BST 84164)  
 CECIL TAYLOR *Unit Structures* (1966) (Blue Note BST 84237)  
 JACK TEAGARDEN *The Swingin' Gate* (1960-63) (Giants Of Jazz GOJ 1026)  
 CAL TJADER *Good Vibes* (Concord CJP 247)  
 MCCOY TYNER *The Real McCoy* (1966) (Blue Note BST 84264)  
 UNITED JAZZ & ROCK ENSEMBLE *United Live Opus 6* (Mood TM6-28642)  
 VARIOUS (Pinetop Smith/M.L. Lewis/etc) *Boogie Woogie Masters* (1928-41) (Affinity AFS 1005)  
 VARIOUS (Tristano/H. Nichols/etc) *Modern Jazz Piano Album* (1946-56) (Savoy WL 70150)  
 FRANK WESS *I Hear Ya Talkin'* (1959) (Savoy WL 70503)  
 WILLIE WILLIAMS (w/Carey Bell)/MAGIC SLIM *I Didn't Give A Damn If Whites Bought It! Ralph Bass Sessions Vol. 3* (1977) (Red Lightnin' RL 0052)

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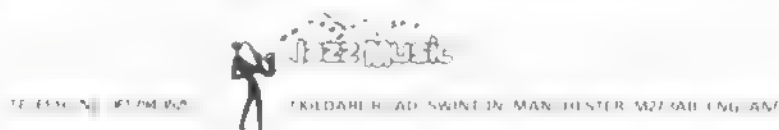
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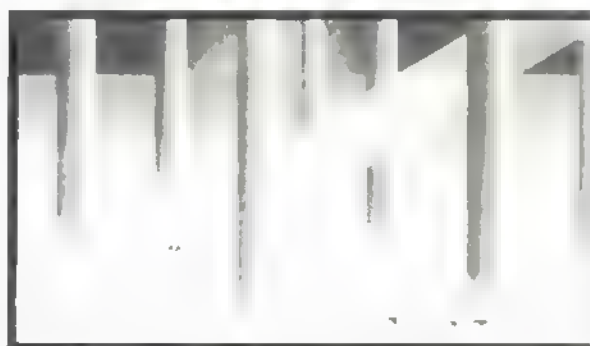
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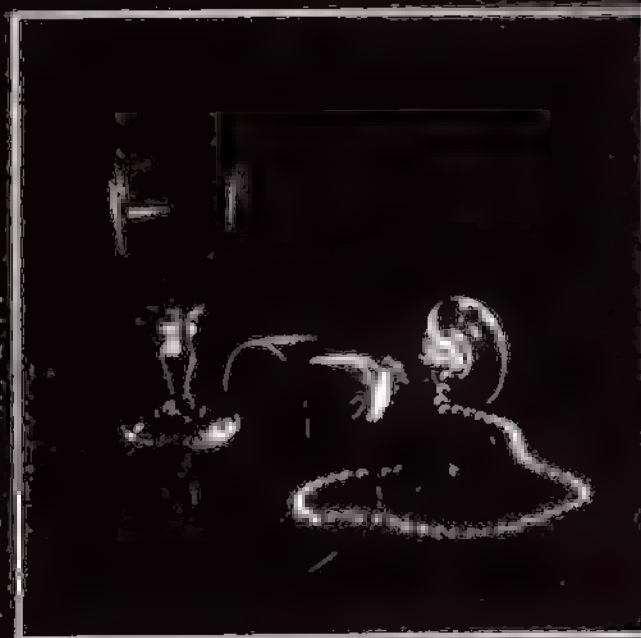
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# HUGH MASEKELA

... continued from page 41

wa" – were interpreted with a haunting beauty. But the clash of cultures was still evident; whereas Hugh and Dudu drip honey, Willis is the sour in the sweet, his "contemporary" electric piano is parochial in comparison and his long, obtrusive intros and connecting phrases are flat and mundane.

Hugh was on his way. Fela Ransome Kuti suggested that Hugh could step in as Africa 70's guest trumpeter. Hugh flew to Lagos and, when touring with Fela in Ghana, met Hedzollah Soundz. He immediately realised that this was the band-he'd been wanting to work with. Their style which was a blend of highlife and Afrobeat, served Hugh admirably on two counts: one, because he could leave behind him both "the quartet" group structure and the "cool-jazz" sound; two, it made accessible indigenous African rhythms which weren't of Mbaqanga origin.

"I was happy to return to Africa, to get back to the energy there, where you don't have to struggle so much to get people to listen. Playing with Hedzollah was like my musical education all over again. It felt like for the first time in a long while I was playing the music of where I'd come from only it was fuller rhythmically, more percussive."

Hedzollah had five percussionists: two conga players, talking drums, shekere and calabash, their lush fullness allowing Hugh to let rip on the trumpet and develop his writing skills which put into song his deep love and concern for the African continent.

Inspired by the new partnership, Hugh brought them over to California where, in the space of five years, six albums were recorded, *I Am Not Afraid* being the best. Here, Hugh Masekela again appraises the past but this time more positively, confidently and less sadly. "Night In Tunisia" is a scorching Afro percussive rendering of Dizzy's tune, and "Stimela (Coaltrain)" remembers the Witbank days in a moving piece of poetry over a tension-filled, spatial, percussive accompaniment, telling the truth of how "We eat shit in the barracks... We live the life of dogs in the mines underground... We live for our families... We long for our children."

It seems surprising that Hugh Masekela had returned to America. But, with Chisa Records there and believing that such a sparkling band as Hedzollah couldn't fail to convert, he'd given it another chance. However, the public didn't respond. After an abortive tour of Nigeria where, within the heat of a military coup, the band's instruments were impounded for six weeks, Hedzollah and Hugh split. Chisa Records collapsed in 1978. Hugh worked briefly with talented pianist Cecil Barnard (tutored by Dollar Brand) and Jackie McLean's son Rennie on sax. The thoughtful improvisatory environment pleased Hugh but it was short lived and, anyhow, Miriam and he had decided to return to Southern Africa.

"At that time, I was ready to go back. But I didn't know where – Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe were all undergoing wars of liberation. But we returned in 1980, first living in Zimbabwe and then in 1982 moving to Botswana."

Cult status was confirmed. The best point to which it was possible for South Africans to come was Lesotho. Hugh's and Miriam's "Going Home" concert was attended by 35,000 people and has been talked about ever since.

Through all the troughs into which their music had been forced to fuse different musical genres and open up new audiences, the people of Southern Africa were still with him.

"It was extraordinary. We hadn't been there for nearly twenty years but the people sang along to all our songs."

They toured Mozambique, playing the first outside concert ever of a vast size (Sam Mangwana played another a year later). Zhomba Records signed Hugh and Levine; ambitious plans were made for recording the cream of South African musicians. Home became Gaborone, Botswana, twenty miles north of the



border with SA where Hugh would be able – at least, musically – to exert pressure on apartheid. A mobile recording studio was flown in from America. The Kalahari Band including top SA session musicians and a soulful quartet of women vocalists was put together. The first part of the plan, Hugh's "African greatest hits" LP (a sort of eulogy to his roots) was recorded. *Technobush* was the result. Great songs like "Grazing In The Grass", "African Secret Society" and "It's Raining" came in for crisp, super-mix treatment and new songs like "Don't Go Lose It Baby" reaffirmed Masakela's concern in always stretching beyond well defined structures to rhythmically cross breed, in this case a funk-African hybrid.

So, in 1984, Hugh Masekela can usually be found midway between Willesden, where Zomba's recording studio is, and Gaborone. Currently, he's working on Barney Rotherbane's first album.

"Barney's the most promising sax player in SA. When I left SA in 1960, he was playing penny whistle on the street." Soon to come out are the albums by Miriam Makeba, the Kalahari Band and the next Hugh Masekela.

The bird has surely come home to roost and he has a lot to say. Watch Out, Botha!

Charles De Ledesma

## HUGH MASEKELA: DISCOGRAPHY

*The Jazz Epistles* – inc. Masekela, Dollar Brand and Jonas Gwanga, 1962 (label unknown).

*Trumpet African* – quartet, 1962 (Mercury).

*The Americanisation Of Ooga Booga* – 1965 (MGM).

*The Emancipation of Hugh Masekela* – 1966 (Chisa).

*Promise of a Future* – 1967 (Chisa).

*Coincidence* – 1967 (Chisa).

*Masekela* – 1968 (Chisa).

*Reconstruction* – 1970 (Chisa).

*Home Is Where The Music Is* – quintet with Dudu Pukwana, 1972 (Chisa).

*You Told Your Mama Not To Worry* – with Hedzollah Soundz, 1973 (Chisa).

*I Am Not Afraid* – with H.S., 1974 (Chisa).

*The Boys Doin It* – with H.S., 1975 (Chisa).

*The African Connection* – with H.S., 1975 (Chisa).

*Colonial Man* – with H.S., 1976 (Chisa).

*Main Event* – with Herb Alpert and Jonas Gwanga, 1978 (A & M).

*Herb Alpert/Hugh Masekela* – 1979 (A & M).

*Home* – 1982 (Moonshine).

*Dollar Bill* – 1982 (Moonshine).

*Technobush* – with the Kalahari Band, 1984 (Jive Africa).



# LETTERS

Dear Wire,

Many thanks to Mike Hames for writing the true facts regarding Albert's death and passing it on to print exactly as I gave it to him. Mr Hames is rare and refreshing. In corresponding with him, I find him to be a great human being, a great writer, honest and to the point. One who does not seek to distort the truth. Instead, he is a man who stays on the case until he gets the real facts. I hold him in high esteem.

My very best wishes always.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Parks  
New York

Dear Wire,

"An essay, indeed, awaits this fine music", writes Richard Cook in his Bill Evans' Soundcheck review. But doesn't he read *The Wire*? I remember an extremely perceptive and articulate piece by Jack Mitchell in *The Wire* 3. Caveat Scriptor!

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Lindley,  
London N1

We welcome your comments, suggestions, criticisms. Send us your letters – we read them *all*.

Write to "Letters", *The Wire*, 51 Beak Street, London W1R 3DH.

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Ran Blake; Camden on Camera; Eric Dolphy; Steve Lacy; Harold Land; Leo Records; Wynton Marsalis; Art Pepper tribute; Max Roach; Scatting & Bopping; Seven Steps to Jazz – Trumpet; John Stevens Part I; Women Live.

2.

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3.

Albert Ayler; Sidney Bechet; Eubie Blake tribute; Eric Dolphy discography Part II; Bill Evans; Festivals on Camera – Gérard Rouy; Percy Grainger; Don McGlynn – film producer; George Russell Part I; Paul Rutherford; Seven Steps – Piano; Archie Shepp; Weather Report.

4.

Blue Note Covers; Channel 4's Jazz; Don Cherry; Festivals 83; FMP; Coleridge Goode; Joe Harriott; Earl 'Fatha' Hines; New York's Soundscape; George Russell Part II; Seven Steps – Tenor; Pat Smythe; Muddy Waters tribute; Urban Sax.

5.

John Cage; Lol Coxhill; Buddy Guy; Mole Jazz; Annette Peacock; Howard Riley; George Russell Part III; Seven Steps – Guitar; Art Tatum; Stan Tracey.

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John Cassavetes; Ganelin Trio reviews reviewed; Jan Garbarek; Billie Holiday; Iron Curtain Jazz; Parker Dial sessions; Seven Steps – Drums.

8.

Cadillac Records; Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*; Count Basie tribute; Ted Curson; Miles Davis concert; Festivals – Moers and Le Mans; Barry Guy; Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand); Metalanguage; Michel Petrucciani; Seven Steps – Bass.

9.

Actual 84; Armstrong's *West End Blues/Weather Bird*; Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones); Art Blakey; Black Masks, White Masks; Borbetomagus; Jazz At The Phil reissues; Hugh Masekela; Thelonious Monk; Jerry Wexler.

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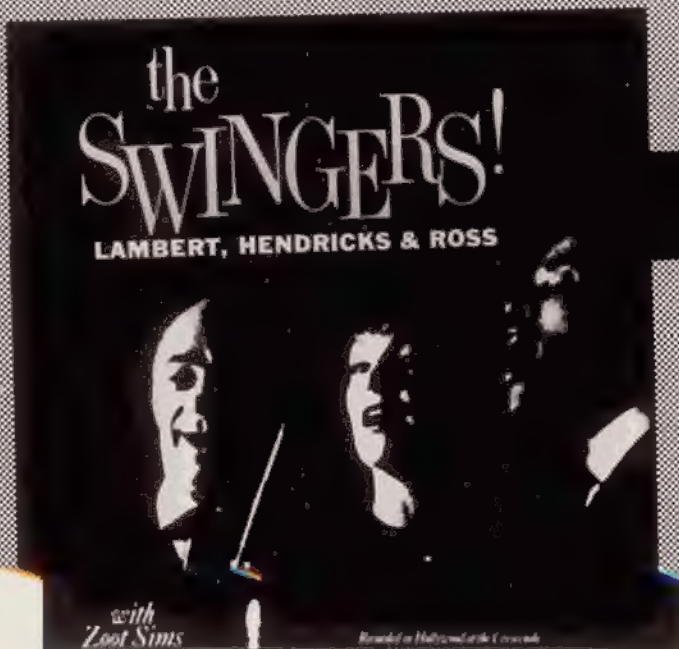
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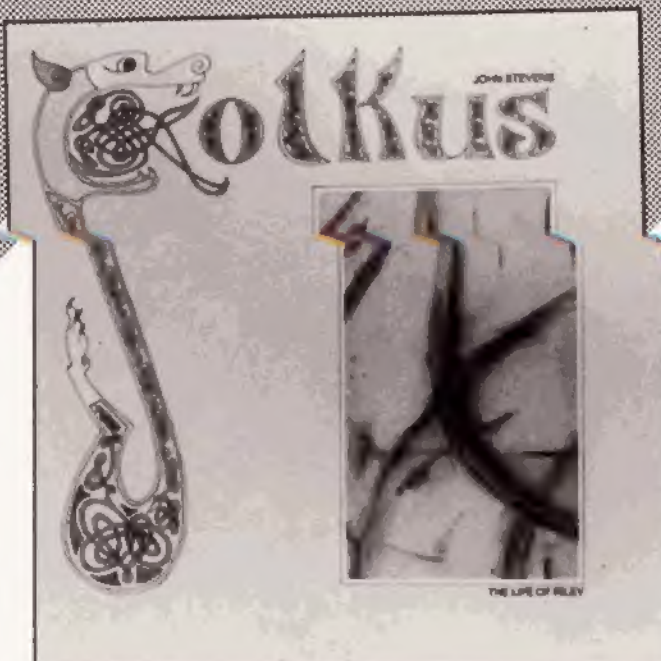
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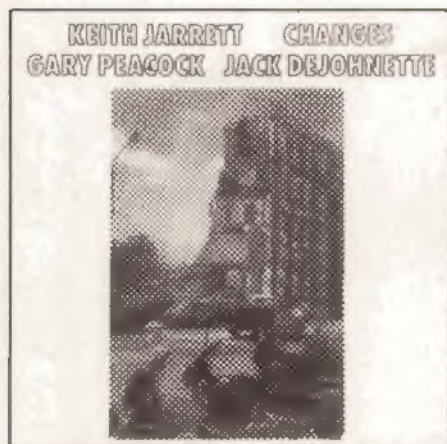
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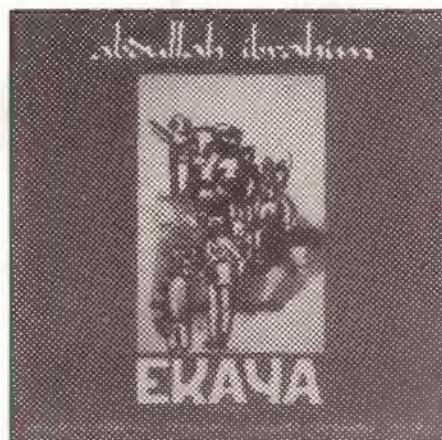
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